



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

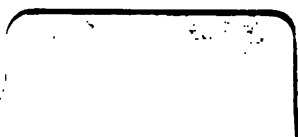
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600069385.



LEONORA.

.

.

**M'CORMACK AND CO., PRINTERS, LONDON—
WORKS, NEWTON.**

LEONORA.

BY

THE HONOURABLE MRS. MABERLY,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOVE MATCH," "MELANTHE," "DISPLAY," "LEONTINE,
OR THE COURT OF LOUIS XV."
ETC. ETC.

I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

MACBETH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER, AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1856.

249. W. 194.

[The Right of Translation is Reserved.]

LEONORA.

CHAPTER I.

THE sun shone the next day, the flowers bloomed, and the summer wind gently stirred the leaves of the old chestnut-trees upon the hill above the house, and swept softly across the long waving grass of the meadows, as Leonora once more looked from her window, and saw the funeral procession of her father moving slowly down the road. The brightness of all around made the passing scene seem still more awful; but of what avail? The mocking contrast yet remained. The roses did not show less fair, as the dark line for a moment over-

shadowed them; nor did the birds pause in their joyous matin song because the tolling of the death-bell might have bid them hush their gladsome notes. Every thing went on as usual, even while that great black hearse swept by, rumbling and nodding its dreary plumes through all. Leonora watched it with straining eyes as it passed each well-known object on the road, till at last, with its mournful train, it disappeared behind the high clump of evergreens that shaded the lodge. In a little while, all was still—all except the tolling of the bell. While that lasted, she remained standing at the window, gazing steadfastly at the far off village spire; but when it ceased, she closed the shutter and sat down, covering her face as if to shut out all from her view.

Leonora did not weep; she had wept herself nearly to stone, and felt as if she could not shed another tear. She had killed her father, and she knew it. The thought must haunt her to her dying day. Whatever line of conduct

she might now pursue, she could not recall the past. Did this conviction cleanse the blackness from her soul? Alas! far from it. She was stunned and horrified, but that was all. She had loved her father, it is true, but with a love so inferior to that which she bestowed upon herself, that it scarcely deserved the name; and, now that she had lost him, she suffered as much from the acute feeling of desolation—of being, as it were, abandoned to strangers, as from any profound sentiment of repentance, or intensity of real and unmixed sorrow for the loss of so affectionate and devoted a parent. Even at this moment the love of self mingled strangely with her grief, and left little room for remorse. It must not, however, be supposed that she did not suffer; she felt utterly miserable. Her whole life seemed to be overthrown in a moment, and the future was wrapped in impenetrable darkness.

How bitterly, now, did she reproach herself for the very deed that a few days before she had

toiled and plotted to accomplish ! It was, however, too late to think upon the past, and she must bear the consequences of her sin. That it was a heavy one she could not but feel, and her punishment had already begun ; for the condemnation she read in every eye, stung her to the quick. Her own servants seemed to look upon her with horror ; for the plain facts of the case had been too apparent to them. As to her husband, she scarcely knew what effect the sudden catastrophe had produced upon him ; for in the first burst of grief she had locked herself into her own room, and, therefore, had not interchanged a word with him since they arrived.

Would he also condemn her ? A sensation of fear came mingling with her grief ; a feeling that in all she undertook the hand of fate was against her ; the very same impression which had urged her on to her hasty and ill-advised marriage ! She shuddered as she felt how little altered were her thoughts, and how momentary

had been her dearly bought safety and peace. All was at sea again. For a long time Leonora sat thus shut up, a prey to her bitter feelings; but the sound of footsteps in the hall roused her to a recollection of all that depended on her, and she felt that even a longer indulgence in her solitude and grief was a boon which she must not expect. There was a great deal to be done; and, overwhelmed and crushed as she was, she must exert herself, or her position might be yet more painful than it now was.

Her first effort was to go to her father's room. It was a trying task; and as she sat down in his well-known arm-chair, before the writing-table, she felt as if her heart would break. She looked round the room, and could scarcely believe in the reality of her sorrow. Every thing was in its place, exactly as he had left it; he, to whom each familiar object on which her eye rested, was a separate treasure. Could it be that he would never see them more? With what pride and pleasure, she remembered,

had he arranged that room, and how often had she been called upon to give her opinion as to the proper disposition of all the ornaments it contained ! They might not be very costly, but they were endeared to him by tender recollections ; for most had been the gift of friends, and he had loved and valued them all, with a tenacity and affection that was almost childish.

As Leonora looked sadly from one thing to another, each seemed separately to reproach her with her crime: she shuddered, and started up from her chair. She could not bear to stay where she was ; she felt as if she was going mad. She would be better any where else, until time had a little softened the acuteness of her pain. And then she remembered the more immediate purpose for which she had at that moment entered that room. It was to possess herself of all the letters that had come for her father, and which she had been told were in the usual place. She well knew where to look for them ; for Mr. Stratford,

occurred to her; and although, of course, the chief details of her father's illness and death had been recounted to her by his servants, yet, as no one had mentioned the letter, she had not thought of it. It was only when she held it open in her hand, and recollected that it had been in the house a week, that she saw the disastrous consequences that might—indeed that must—arise from its contents being generally known.

It was useless to try and deceive herself upon the subject; she felt certain that many persons had read that letter—how many it was impossible for her to tell, but one would have sufficed. She knew how rapidly news was disseminated; and the excitement and horror which the death of Mr. Stratford had created, would render doubly interesting every detail, even the most trifling, that could bear upon its cause. It was not, however, so much the opinion of the public that she dreaded at this moment, as that of her newly-wedded

husband, who was now her sole protection and support. She had worked upon his fears, by setting before him the positive certainty of her father's refusal to permit the marriage, while her letter to Mr. Stratford urged, as an excuse for her conduct, that Sir Edward Devereux had peremptorily refused to sanction his brother's marrying at all, and had threatened to withhold the yearly allowance that he made him should such a measure be persisted in. The two stories did not at all agree, and, the suspicions of a man like Mr. Devereux once roused, would not be so easily tranquilized. She was fairly caught in her own toils. Her fears, however, were not destined to be so immediately realized as she might have expected. When she and her husband met again, she found him such a prey to sorrow, that he was not likely at that moment to devote his thoughts to any unravelling of her plots.

With all his faults, Stuart Devereux was not destitute of feeling and affection towards those

who were kind to him ; and he was so shocked and overwhelmed by the scene through which he had just passed, that he felt utterly prostrated. That kind, good old man, who never had received him without a smile—that being so full of love, and gentleness, and benignity—how had he been rewarded for his many virtues? Hurried to the tomb by the hand that he loved best. It was a cruel fate ; and Stuart Devereux, as he wept over it, bitterly reproached himself for the part that he had played, and honestly lamented the weakness and infatuation that had led him so hastily to adopt an extreme course, from which there was no retreat—a base and deceitful course, for which there was no excuse. He writhed under the upbraiding pangs of conscience, and was bent more lowly by them than was even Leonora herself ; for the urgent dangers of her position had left her, as she supposed, no other means of extrication than the desperate step she had taken. This might have been a reason

but could not be an excuse ; but even the reason, false as it was, could not be pleaded by Stuart Devereux, and for the first time he began to feel the terrible remorse that follows the thought of having been instrumental to the death of another. How often had he almost laughed at his brother for his sensitiveness upon the same point ! This thought had more than once recurred to him that very day, when standing beside the grave of their mutual friend—for there the brothers had met.

They had met and they had parted beside that new-made grave ; for the same home was no longer to shelter them both. But not even a look of unkindness had passed between them ; and, after the dreaded interview was over, the self-accusing Stuart felt how deeply he had wronged those who best loved him, and in whom he should have trusted. All the petty feelings of jealousy and childish spite, in which he had once indulged, were hushed before the one great sorrow of the hour ; and, as the two brothers

walked together from the churchyard, the younger wept afresh, and almost envied the repose of him whom they had just laid lowly in the earth. Few words had been interchanged ; but the gentle and sorrowful kindness of Sir Edward's manner, was a more keen reproach than the bitterest that he could have used.

CHAPTER II.

IN the little blue drawing-room at Winton Park, which was generally the scene of uninterrupted domestic happiness, a grave family party was assembled. It consisted only of Lord and Lady Glanberris and their eldest daughter; but, from the countenances of all three, it was evident that some very painful topic had been, or was at that moment under discussion; for the usually joyous Lady Alice was crying bitterly, as she sat upon the end of the sofa near her mother's chair. Lady Glanberris did not seem much happier, as, with a flushed cheek and quivering lip, she looked anxiously from her weeping child to the face of her husband; who, with his thick black eyebrows strongly contracted, and one hand

pushed into the buttoned-up front of his coat, was walking up and down the room, apparently in a very disturbed state of mind. His passing and repassing footsteps were the only sound that broke the deep silence of the room, except now and then an hysterical sob from Alice, whose face was buried in her handkerchief.

At last, Lady Glanberris, leaning over the arm of her large blue chair, said kindly to her daughter, while her own mild eyes glistened with a tear—

“My child, you don’t know how much it grieves me to see you suffering, or you would try and not give way so to your grief.”

“I do, mamma ; I know it is very selfish, but I cannot help it, I am so very very sorry,” murmured Alice, through her tears.

“Believe me,” continued Lady Glanberris, in the same tone, “I feel just as much as you do the painful position in which we are all placed ; but my first duty is towards you, my child. I am sure I have acted right in deciding

as I have done, and that your father is of the same opinion," and she looked up with an air of appeal at her husband, whose perambulations had just brought him to the edge of the rug.

"There cannot be a doubt upon the subject," was his reply, as he passed in his walk, and fixed his eyes upon his weeping daughter; then he added gently, "and, in a little while, Alice will see the matter in its true light, and agree with us."

"Yes, papa; I dare say you are right, and I am sure I do not for a moment mean to dispute your opinion; but it is so very hard to give up a friend. Is it not?"

"Nothing is more painful; it is even worse than losing one," replied Lord Glanberris, with a sigh; "but, under the circumstances, the pain of one's own feelings is not to be considered. There is, first, the conviction of what is right and proper, and then there is the opinion of the world to be consulted, and the danger of bad example to be avoided. All

these combined, make it an imperative duty for us to decide as we have done."

"Poor, dear Leonora! I was so very fond of her—I never liked any one so much!" said Alice, in a stifled voice, and trying to restrain her tears, though they still flowed rapidly.

"She was very beautiful and very charming; but her conduct has made it quite impossible that your mother and I can permit you to associate with her," replied Lord Glanberris very decidedly; and a thankful glance from the gentle blue eyes of his wife showed how completely they agreed upon the subject, and how glad she was to be spared the pain of repeating the harsh truth to the tender-hearted Alice.

"It was very horrible," said the latter, in a low voice; "but she could not have foreseen the consequences. Surely, papa, she could not have had the least idea that such a dreadful misfortune could happen, or she would never have run away."

"That does not make the slightest difference, Alice," observed Lady Glanberris, "though it is very kind of you to try and find an excuse for your friend; but there really is none to be made."

"A girl who can so far forget her first duty, both to God and her parents, is not fit society for any respectable woman," said Lord Glanberris sternly: "she has violated every rule of duty and propriety; and, let me ask you, who could respect a woman so utterly devoid of delicacy, as well as honesty and honour, as to leave the house of her parents, and go off with a man who is a comparative stranger to her?"

"One would not have such a person for a servant, much less for a friend," suggested Lady Glanberris, looking tenderly at her daughter, whose cheeks were burning with shame as she thought of what would now be said of her beloved Leonora.

Alice, though she knew that her father was

quite right, could not help venturing a word in her defence—

“Yes, papa,” she said timidly; “but all people who run away, are not always excluded from society, are they?”

“If not absolutely excluded, how are they looked upon? With contempt and distrust; sentiments in which their own husbands, who have had such good experience, commonly join. Who could either respect or confide in a woman who had shown herself so skilled in all the arts of dissimulation, so wanting in delicacy and self-respect? She is a being branded for ever; even her own children will despise and condemn her.”

“It certainly is a terrible blot upon a woman’s name, and one that nothing can ever atone for to a father’s or a mother’s heart. I do not wonder poor Mr. Stratford sunk under it,” said Lady Glanberris, feelingly.

“Oh, it was dreadful!” exclaimed Alice with a shudder. “I think it is the most wrong thing

any one could do. How could Leonora be so cruel? I should not be surprised if she died of grief now."

"And I should be very much surprised," replied her father, who had no disposition to be lenient towards the offender. "Shocked and sorry she may well be, and humbled too, for I suspect her father's death will make a very great difference in her position."

"I hope Mr. Devereux will be kind to her," said Alice anxiously; "one never knows what people will do, or are doing. I always thought Sir Edward liked her particularly; and yet you see she said, in her letter to her father, that, as she had set her heart on marrying Stuart Devereux, she must run away, or Sir Edward would prevent the marriage, he was so violent against it. Now, who would have thought that?"

Lady Glanberris looked anxiously at her husband, who only answered by rather a satirical smile, and then she said—"My dear Alice,

you know how your father and I have always confided in you, and told you all our thoughts and motives of action, far more openly than parents in general do to their children. We have had no unnecessary secrets, and I do not wish to make one now; so I tell you, that it is our mutual opinion, that there is some mystery about Leonora, of which we are not aware."

"Mystery, mama! But nothing wrong, I hope—Oh, I am sure there is nothing wrong!" cried the poor girl in a voice of alarm.

"God forbid that I should judge any one hardly!" replied her mother; "but it seems to me—to us, I mean—strange, that a marriage which would have been really an advantageous one to Mr. Devereux, should be so strongly objected to by his brother."

"I am quite of that opinion," observed Lord Glanberris.

"Perhaps some jealousy, or prejudice," suggested Alice.

"Sir Edward is far above either, my dear

Alice. He is excellent—and generosity itself. I have known him ever since he was a child; it is just that knowledge of his character which makes me believe, that he never would have objected unless for some good reason—some very grave reason, perhaps.”

“But she had not seen him for ever so long, mama, except at the ball here, and then she never spoke to him. How could she know whether he would object or not? Belinda told me it was at the ball here that the marriage was settled. I don’t understand it. I do not think Leonora ever saw Sir Edward at all.”

“My dear Alice, I am quite certain of what I say—Leonora did see Sir Edward! The day after the ball he was with her for a long time;—subsequently Mr. Devereux called upon her, and the day but one afterwards she went away. It certainly does look as if they had had some explanation that was not very satisfactory.”

“Then, again,” added Lord Glanberris, stop-

ping short before his daughter's chair, for he had resumed his walk; "perhaps, Alice, you do not know that there was also some mystery about Lord Strathearn. You did not know that he was at the ball here."

"Lord Strathearn! — impossible! Sir Edward himself told me he was gone to Dover!" exclaimed Alice.

"He came back, though, and saw Miss Stratford here. They had a long conversation, and then he went away. His carriage with post-horses was waiting at the gate: I know it to a certainty."

"How very strange! I always thought he wanted to marry Leonora, he seemed to like her so very much. Perhaps, he only came back to ask her to marry him and she refused him, and that was the reason he went away."

"Perhaps so," replied Lord Glanberris with a smile; "but I confess all these histories and mysteries have a very odd look."

"Leonora is so beautiful, and was always allowed to lead so much too independent a life," kindly suggested Lady Glanberris.

"Yes, mama !" quickly rejoined Alice; "and then she had no mother. I think she ought not to be judged quite like other people."

"She has made a miserable match," said Lord Glanberris, without taking any notice of the good-natured insinuation of Alice, "and that convinces me that there was some immediate necessity for her marriage. So knowing a young lady would not have thrown herself away in such a hurry upon a nonentity like Stuart Devereux, without a reason."

"He is very ugly, certainly; but he seems harmless. I hope he will be kind to poor Leonora !" replied Alice, with her eyes again filling with tears.

"Time will show," answered Lord Glanberris, carelessly. "I confess I cannot take much interest in a person who has so misconducted herself. I never could see her decked

out in all her jewels with either patience or pleasure: I should always think of her poor father lying dead in the churchyard at Whittington. Oh! it was an infamous act! She might as well have put a pistol to his head at once—better, in fact;” and Lord Glanberris, who really was both extremely shocked and very indignant, suddenly seated himself violently in an opposite arm-chair, and pushed both hands into his pockets. Alice knew that with him this was always an attitude expressive of anger and determination, therefore she wisely refrained from any further pleadings in behalf of her guilty friend; but she turned to her mother, and said—

“Well, then, mama, what answer shall I send? You know, I must write to-day. Poor Leonora will think it so very unkind if I do not! You know, I have not written to her once.”

“No! of course not, my child; it would

have been very improper if you had," answered Lady Glanberris, gravely.

"But, now that she has written to me, I must send some answer; must I not, mama?"

"Some answer will be necessary, I suppose," was the reply.

"You see, mama, she says she is so very anxious to see us—that she has seen nobody yet."

"That is not surprising, my love. Her poor father has only just been one month dead. You do not suppose she could receive company yet, I hope?"

"No, mama—but friends, intimate friends, cannot be called company. It would have been a comfort to her to have seen us, I am sure, or else why should she have written?"

"I am quite sure she wished it, and I am as sorry as you are to give pain; but it must be, Alice. I cannot possibly permit you, either to go to her, or to keep up any correspondence; and you must have a little courage, and tell her so yourself."

“Mama!” said Alice, creeping up, and laying her burning cheek upon her mother’s hand, that was resting upon the arm of the chair, “I don’t think I ever could write such a thing; it would seem so very cruel. Could not you write it for me? I know I never should be able.”

“Little coward!” said Lady Glanberris, with a tear glistening in her eye, and smoothing with her white taper fingers the soft brown curls of Alice; “but I will write, if it saves you from so much pain. Perhaps,” she added, after a moment’s pause, “it is better that the answer should come from me. She will mind more what an old woman says to her than a young one!”

“Oh! thank you, dear mama! It would indeed be dreadful if I had to find fault with her, and reproach her with what she had done. It would be like Edith finding fault with me; at which I should be very indignant. But what will you say, mama?—nothing very hard,

I hope! I dare say she is dreadfully unhappy.
You will not say any thing very hard, mama!"

"Alice!" said her mother gravely, but in
a very soft tone, "I will tell her exactly the
truth."

CHAPTER III.

THE consternation with which the tragical event at The Cliffs had filled the hitherto peaceful village of Whittington, had in no degree subsided, even though several weeks had elapsed since Mr. Stratford had been laid in the tomb. It seldom happens that the exact truth upon any subject connected with private affairs goes forth to the public; but, thanks to a happy combination of circumstances, not the smallest detail relating to the flight of Leonora remained in obscurity. Every thing was perfectly known and accurately repeated; even the gown and bonnet in which the fair fugitive appeared, as for the last time she drove her beautiful little brown ponies up the great street of the village, were minutely described.

There was but one point which was still a secret between Leonora and her new brother-in-law; and that was the cause of Sir Edward Devereux's objection to her marriage with his brother. That, of course, could not be ascertained at present; but Lord and Lady Glanberris were not the only persons who entertained a suspicion that some mysterious reason must exist, to account for so strange a difficulty being raised on his part.

What better marriage could he hope for for his brother, who was so little attractive in himself? Leonora was young, beautiful, agreeable, and rich, and to all appearance extremely amiable and good. What more could he wish for and desire? And yet it was perfectly well known that not only had he protested against the marriage, but that since it had taken place, and the past was beyond recall, Sir Edward had positively refused to receive Leonora as his brother's wife, and that Atherston Castle was closed against her,

apparently for ever. This was a lasting subject of meditation for the reflecting minds of Whittington. If other points of the narrative grew threadbare and lost a little of their original gloss, this one retained its pristine brilliancy, which promised never to diminish—much less to disappear: it was the daily bread of all the gossips in the town, and for it every other topic of conversation, however affectionately cherished, was readily abandoned.

Mrs. Blakemore gave up for the time her eulogiums on antiquated books with hard names and dry subjects, her dissertations on geology, astronomy, and philosophy; while her three lank daughters ceased their pinings for crinoline petticoats and permission to waltz; Mrs. Bedingfield paused in her humble imitations of a dressmaker's vocabulary, and was silent as to the glories of *moire antique* and *tulle*; and all this to talk of Leonora and her marriage, and the mystery that hung over the conduct of Sir Edward Devereux. And every body else

did the same: it seemed a matter of vital importance to all. In the mean time, the only person to whom it really was of great consequence, was, of course, totally silent upon the subject.

Leonora, in the depth of her retirement at The Cliffs, knew very little of what was going on around her. From her intimate acquaintance with all the individuals composing the society of Whittington, she was pretty well aware that she and her affairs were duly discussed; but of all details of these discussions she was ignorant. It would have been difficult for her at that moment to have been otherwise; for, since the day of her father's funeral, she had not seen a single person. Nothing could have more strongly marked the general condemnation in which she was held, than this sudden avoidance, on the part of a community that existed only on visiting, gossiping, and retailing every little fact, however trifling, that might happen to reveal itself. A great restraint

must have been imposed by some very powerful reason upon propensities so naturally strong, and so carefully nurtured; and Leonora, though she did not know, could easily guess the nature of that cause.

Whittington, like most other places and many other people, had but few decided tenets of its own, but cautiously followed the meanderings of the two great streams of opinion, flowing from the two great houses of the neighbourhood, Winton Park and Atherston Castle. As soon as it was ascertained what these opinions really were, the tractability of the public became admirable: not a dissentient voice was heard; it seemed as if one mind animated the whole body. It may be imagined that, upon a point so important as the admission or exclusion of a lady who had conducted herself in such a manner as Leonora had done, the immaculates of Whittington were peculiarly sensitive; and they were extremely puzzled between their hope of being thought the very

paragons of propriety and their desire of not affronting Mr. Devereux—who was a great person in their eyes, and might any day be a much greater one, should Sir Edward happen to die, which was thought very probable. It was a position of extreme delicacy, and no decision could be rapidly taken; therefore it was at last agreed, that, to shift the responsibility upon some person better able to incur it, was much safer, and more agreeable than to run any risks themselves.

Lady Glanberris was the lawgiver of the whole country: whatever she did was therefore sure to be right, and so all determined to do exactly the same. It was very soon discovered that neither she nor Lord Glanberris had even sent a letter to The Cliffs since the return of Leonora, and to this intelligence was speedily added the still more astonishing news of Sir Edward's refusal to visit his brother's wife. This settled the affair. Not a card was sent, nor an inquiry made for the secluded inmates

of The Cliffs—people did not even look that way as they passed down the road, and Leonora and her husband were as much immured within the walls as though they had been in a prison.

As Leonora never went outside the gates of the park, no one could say how she looked, or what she did. Once Mr. Devereux, whose horses had been removed from Atherston, was seen riding through the village; but no one knew more than this simple fact. The position of these two isolated beings was disagreeable enough. Leonora, as soon as the first burst of grief was over, began to look around her, and very soon perceived the tacit sentence of exile that had been pronounced upon her. She was far from having expected it; and perhaps, had the dire catastrophe of her father's death not followed so immediately upon her own fault, some more lenient spirit might have pervaded the generous breast of the public. As it was, however, the general indignation could not be more cuttingly expressed, and the haughty

nature of Leonora writhed under the contempt she endured. She did not, however, mean to endure it quietly, without taking a step in her own defence.

Her first attempt was to obtain the assistance of Belinda White; but Belinda had suddenly become invisible: she had been actually confined to her bed for several weeks, and after she had recovered she was in no hurry to go to The Cliffs. Besides the very painful visit that it must be to her, she had an invincible horror of death, or even of going into the house where any one had died. Now, as she had been almost the first person summoned upon the sudden illness of Mr. Stratford, both these misfortunes had fallen upon her, and had contributed not a little to the increase of the illness under which she laboured at the time the melancholy intelligence had reached her. At last, however, she was quite well again, and her kind heart could not resist the continued entreaties of Leonora, "that she would come and see her." Under

the circumstances it was a courageous act; but Belinda White had a good deal of independence in her character: she was besides a privileged person, and could do a great many things that no one else ever thought of doing. And so she went.

Many were the tears that Belinda shed, and the words of regret that she spoke; but these did not do any good. She was powerless to aid, even had she been inclined to do so; and Leonora could only learn from her the fact, of which, indeed, she was fully aware, "that every one was determined not to speak to her." Poor Belinda! she could only weep and lament over the decision—she could not alter it. All she could recommend as any sort of consolation was, that Leonora should write to Lady Glanberris, or at least to Alice, expressing a wish to see them. She had little hope of the success of this move, for she felt too keenly the magnitude of the sin Leonora had committed, to imagine that Lady Glanberris would think lightly of it; but

Belinda White could not bear to see any one suffering. Her heart was so tender and affectionate, that, at the moment she beheld the tears of another, she would have made any sacrifice of herself that could have bid them cease. In the case of Leonora, however, neither sympathy nor advice were of any avail. In the course of the same day on which her letter to Alice had been despatched, the answer was received from Lady Glanberris. The heart of Leonora sunk when she saw the writing; she knew that it foreboded ill, or Alice would have written herself.

She was not deceived. Lady Glanberris, although the kindest of human beings, conceived she had a duty to perform, and never wavered when that was the case. She had written to Leonora, as she said she would do, "exactly the truth," which was, "that she considered the step she had taken, in openly defying her father's authority and abandoning his protection, so extremely reprehensible, that she

could not allow her daughter to associate with her."

This, with some soothing expressions of regret, was the whole of the letter. It was not calculated to revive the spirits of the mourning bride. It, however, revealed to Leonora, not only the truth of her present position, but gave her a very unpleasant foretaste of what she might expect for the future: at least from a great portion of society. Was she then to be on sufferance only, in that world in which it was her ambition to shine? Was she to lose the fruits of the terrible sacrifice she had made, merely to satisfy the prejudices or fancies of a few foolish women? It must not be. With a gesture of contemptuous indignation, she crushed the letter in her hand and immediately destroyed it—thankful, however, that it had opened her eyes while yet there was time.

She instantly decided upon her course. A rapid retreat was better than an untenable position. Whittington was not the whole world. There

were other places, and other countries, where her history was not known, and where she might contrive to lead a very agreeable life, until the excitement consequent upon her elopement had somewhat subsided. The plan was plausible; and suited, moreover, so well with arrangements that she would soon be obliged to make with regard to The Cliffs, that she was certain that no opposition would be made to her wishes by Mr. Devereux. The place had been left to Mr. Stratford only for his life: it was, therefore, by the kindness of the present owner that she had been permitted to remain there so long. She had anticipated a longer stay as he was still abroad, when all at once her plans were altered by the vision of annoyance and discomfort that the letter of Lady Glanberris had caused to pass before her eyes.

Nothing remained to be done but to collect the little property that had been left to her, and to depart. And then her extreme

poverty first became apparent to her. With the exception of her jewels, she had scarcely any thing. An almost trifling sum of ready money was all that Mr. Stratford had left; for his whole income had been derived from an annuity, and had only just sufficed to keep up the somewhat too expensive establishment he maintained. Leonora tremblingly contemplated the reality of her position, and saw that without her jewels she would have been—and would still be, should her husband die—utterly penniless. She had married without any settlements, confiding in the assurance of Mr. Devereux, that, once married, his brother would never refuse “to do something for him,” and then that his first care would be to provide most amply for her. The very comprehensive phrase of “doing something for them,” did not seem, in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Devereux, likely to extend farther than words.

Sir Edward very distinctly told his brother that, as far as Mrs. Devereux was concerned, he

was determined completely to ignore her existence, but that his own allowance would be paid to him as usual. This was all he could obtain, and he knew his brother too well to venture to urge farther. He had ridden over to Atherston at Leonora's suggestion, in order not only to make the demand, but to pave the way to, at least, a formal reconciliation; but when she found that in neither instance he had been successful, she all at once changed her mind, and insisted upon her husband's never returning to a house where she had been refused admittance. This was too natural an objection for him to dispute, and the submissive Stuart quietly complied, and visited Atherston no more: not, however, without secret misgivings that he was doing both an impolitic and an ungrateful action; for the kindness of Sir Edward had penetrated his heart, and done more towards forming a character out of the chaos of selfish vanities of which his own nature was composed, than years of contact with the

common minds of the world could have effected.

To Sir Edward, who was thoroughly acquainted with the disposition of both parties, his brother appeared to him more sinned against than sinning; and, instead of reproaching him with the folly he had committed, he looked on him with sorrowful pity. He knew that his punishment must come one day, and come by the very sin committed by him. Why should he accelerate his doom? Stuart was still happy in his ignorance, and might remain so until the day ordained by fate should arrive? Many persons would have found a cruel pleasure in revealing the truth, and overwhelming by it the individual who had so wantonly deceived them. But Sir Edward was too noble to act thus. The time for revelation was past: his brother was now married to the woman he himself so utterly despised. He would despise her still, avoid her, and repel her advances with scorn; but the hand

of God alone must dissolve a union that had been sanctified by the church.

It was to these feelings that the forbearance of Sir Edward ought to have been ascribed, and not, as they were by the presumptuous Leonora, to a lingering affection for herself, which she doubted not she should be able to fan into a flame. Her indignation upon discovering how false had been her calculation, knew no bounds. All the deceitfulness of her nature seemed to awake with double force; her softer feelings turned to hate: and she resolved to bide her time, but sooner or later to be revenged for the insult she imagined she had received, and the contempt that she was forced to endure.

CHAPTER IV.

EVEN in Whittington happiness and sorrow were pretty nearly as evenly chequered as they are all over the world, and good and evil natures were about as equally mixed. There were kind hearts as well as bad ones; and as, on the great occasion of the downfall of Leonora from the high social position she had hitherto enjoyed, people were considerably more excited than usual, and therefore a little less prudent, their good or bad qualities came broadly into view. Some were exceedingly kind, and truly mourned her fate; others, pretending to do the same, were only sententious and self-exalting; while a few were positively spiteful, and made no secret of their delight in seeing "vice punished" in the way it deserved.

Among the latter was Mrs. Percy Linklater;

which might appear rather an anomaly, if people had known that it was to Leonora she was indebted for her introduction to Sir Edward Devereux, and to Sir Edward that she owed the very rapid rise in her fortunes which had lately taken place. But Mrs. Percy Linklater was like a great many other people, cringing in adversity and insolent in success. Perhaps no one had particularly remarked it; but it was a fact, even though her insignificance might have veiled it from the eye of the public. Mrs. Percy Linklater had, however, her own reasons for wishing to appear singularly devout and proper; and now that she was independent, she could afford to be very loud and plain-spoken in her invectives against any ladies who were supposed to be the least "ill-conducted." Mrs. Percy Linklater was a good deal changed within the last few weeks in person, as well as in manners. She had lost that anxious, ferret-like look with which she used to go about, insinuating

herself into every hole and corner where she thought it possible to make acquaintance with any one whose influence could be turned to account, and an air of confidence, almost of repose, sat upon her hard hatchet-like face: it actually appeared as if it had grown fat since Mr. Percy Linklater had been appointed to the agency of Ailthorpe, with a house and the prospect of very nearly a hundred a year. She was in fact inexpressibly happy; having at length succeeded in her plans. She had got rid of the man she hated, and also disencumbered herself of the various expenses entailed upon her by his cigars and his miserable food, and six-pennyworth of washing per week; to say nothing of his wardrobe, which all went into one small drawer, but was only replenished every second or third year. Her list of petty savings was, however, to her a study of infinite delight. Next to "gentility," money was her dearest object in life, and not a day elapsed but she counted up her pennies, as

though to assure herself that they had not diminished in the night. She had remained at Whittington, although the house occupied by her husband at Ailthorpe was much better; but the pleasures of independence and the charms of society made amends for "the little front parlour," which certainly was of most limited dimensions. Small, however, as it was, Mrs. Percy Linklater sometimes gave a tea-party in it; but, since the departure of her husband, the number of her guests had materially diminished. Perhaps it was on the plea of economy that her invitations were now so limited; but that was a secret only known to Mrs. Percy Linklater; though it might have been guessed at by one other person besides.

It was on the occasion of one of these select receptions that Mrs. Percy Linklater, arrayed in a new dress of apple-green silk, and a blonde cap covered with pink hyacinths, was sitting one evening evidently expecting company. Her old lilac gown, which had

been so well known to the inhabitants of Whittington for many a long month as to render her identity without it a matter of great uncertainty, had been at length discarded, and, in all the pride of conscious beauty, Mrs. Percy Linklater settled the black velvet bracelets on her skinny arms, adjusted her lace scarf, and looked at herself in the glass for at least the twentieth time within the last half hour, just as a loud ring at the door gave notice of the arrival of a visitor. The door was opened by the indefatigable Betsy, who was fully as much renovated as her mistress, and she immediately announced "Mr. Elijah Stock." Mrs. Percy Linklater gently rose from her chair, and casting a last look as she passed the little bit of glass in a broad gilt frame that hung upon the wall, advanced a few steps towards the door to receive her guest.

And Elijah Stock entered. He was a tall, very thin man, with a long pale face, save a delicate pink spot on either cheek, small light-blue eyes,

and an abundance of yellow hair pasted flatly down the sides of his face, perhaps to supply the place of whiskers. He was certainly not handsome, but the gentle embarrassment that pervaded the manner and countenance of Mrs. Percy Linklater the moment he entered the room, seemed to prove that, at least, he was a very interesting individual. She actually blushed, and her little black eyes twinkled with delight.

"My dear Mr. Stock, how late you are! I began to be afraid some of your numerous avocations might have detained you, and deprived me of the pleasure of your company," she said, as, taking his hand, she led him to the sofa, and, sitting down, made him place himself by her side.

"Would it have been a great loss?" he inquired tenderly.

"Oh, Mr. Stock! can you ask such a question?" she replied, averting her face, and beginning to make the tea.

"Mr. Stock!" he repeated, with a tone of disappointment. "Why that formal appellation, Sarah? Have you repented of your amicable intentions? The last time I was here, you promised to call me Elijah."

"Well, then—Elijah—if you will have it so," said the lady, with a pretty affectation of timidity; "but, remember, you must be very careful, for——" and she paused, as if she did not exactly know how to finish her sentence.

"Of course, my beloved Sarah! and the work in which we are engaged will attest the purity of our friendship. Fellow-labourers in the good cause have no reason to blush for their intimacy."

"Yes! but my position is one of extreme delicacy," replied Mrs. Percy, softly, "separated as I am from my husband."

"You are, therefore, in greater need of a friend—a true and zealous friend—who will look upon your interests as his own,"

replied Elijah, warmly. "A woman all alone is so very unprotected—so helpless, I may say."

"It is a very trying position," said Mrs. Percy, with a sigh and a supplicating look at her companion, as she handed him a cup of very weak tea.

"And so lonely," he added, in a pitying voice.

"Dreadful!" she said, shaking her head; "but one is obliged to endure it. People who move in an elevated circle in society must be exceedingly circumspect: every eye is upon them," and Mrs. Percy looked nervously towards the door, for she thought she had heard a sound.

"And, with your high connections," continued Elijah, without appearing to share in her alarm, "I understand your anxiety to preserve your reputation. It certainly seems easily lost: look at Mrs. Devereux, not a soul speaks to her."

"I should think not, indeed, the good-for-nothing creature!" said Mrs. Percy, tossing her head.

"She has not your reserve, Sarah," observed Mr. Stock, leaning back upon the sofa and taking the fat hand of Mrs. Percy, who was leaning back also, while the tea was supposed to be gathering strength enough to afford a second cup.

"Oh, Mr. Stock!—Elijah, I mean—now, really—how can you?" exclaimed Mrs. Percy, half burying her face in the lace of her pocket handkerchief, and with so feeble an attempt at extricating her hand that it remained locked in that of the admiring Elijah.

"You know you promised to introduce me to some of your grand friends," he observed, without taking any notice of the faint struggles of Mrs. Percy's fingers.

"And so I will! Did you think I had forgotten it—and when *you* had asked me, too?"

replied the lady in a tone of the most tender reproach.

"I don't know—I fear that you are not very anxious about it. I don't think you care for me as I do for you, Sarah!"

"Oh, Elijah! how can you say so? Have you any right—any reason—to say such a cruel thing?" murmured Mrs. Percy in the softest tone; and, according as each word seemed to be wrung from her by the violence of her feelings, she leaned her head more and more towards the shoulder of her dear Elijah, till the frightful little bunch of ringlets that shaded her cheek hung over the rusty black sleeve of his coat. The fragrance of the macassar oil was not enticing; but apparently Mr. Stock had no antipathy to it, for he gently took the spiral ends of the ringlets in his disengaged hand, and looked at them admiringly, as the word "Sarah!" softly escaped him.

"Ma'am," said a loud voice, "shall I bring

in the other muffin? It is getting quite cold;" and the starved face of Betsy, decorated with her new cap and red ribbons, showed itself through the half-open door, which appeared as though it had improved in its manners, for it formerly used always to make a great noise when it was opened.

"Yes—certainly!" answered Mrs. Percy, recovering her senses, and setting herself "to rights" all in a moment; and then, as Betsy shut the noiseless door and departed, she shook her hand towards it, and exclaimed—

"That's what that horrid woman used all the oil for to-day; but she shall repent it—that I promise her!"

"Learn to forgive injuries," said Elijah sweetly; but the arrival of the muffin prevented the meek answer that doubtless would have been returned, and Mrs. Percy Linklater, to hide her confusion, actually put another whole spoonful of tea into the teapot. Mr.

Stock, however, nothing abashed, took half the muffin upon his plate, and began the conversation anew.

"You have not told me, my dear Sarah, how the great work progresses."

"Pretty well, I am happy to say: I got fifteen new subscribers yesterday," replied Mrs. Percy, complacently.

"Fifteen!" exclaimed her companion in a tone of disappointment; "I had hoped for fifty! I know a lady who collected fifteen hundred pounds, all in pennies and halfpennies. I fear, Sarah, you are not a zealous labourer in the vineyard."

"You wrong me there, Elijah; indeed you wrong me, and cruelly, too! My zeal in our great undertaking is as fervent as your own," whimpered the lady.

"The proof is as yet wanting," gravely observed Elijah, shaking his head.

"But if people will not give their money," expostulated Mrs. Percy.

"I never take a refusal!" drily replied Mr. Stock.

"But you are so persuasive," said Mrs. Percy; and, as she uttered these words in a plaintive tone, Mrs. Percy Linklater ventured to put her stumpy fingers upon the long emaciated hand of her companion, who solemnly replied, as he raised it to his lips—

"Have you reflected upon that which I yesterday proposed to you?"

"Deeply, Elijah!" hesitatingly answered the lady.

"You know that I counselled you to give proof of your devotion to the cause by a pecuniary contribution towards its advancement. Ten pounds towards the 'Enlightenment Society' would be of great service."

"If I thought so," hesitated Mrs. Percy, as her eye turned uneasily towards her mahogany writing-desk, that stood near upon a table.

"You doubt me then, Sarah?" murmured Elijah tenderly, as he marked the glance, and

he disengaged his fingers from the clammy grasp in which they were imprisoned.

"Oh, no!—never, Elijah! My confidence is implicit," exclaimed Mrs. Percy, as she gazed tenderly upon the elongated face of her companion, who dryly replied—

"Then act as your generous heart prompts," responded Elijah Stock, "and he fixed his pale blue eyes upon her, all the time keeping a strict watch upon the mahogany desk, to which Mrs. Percy now rushed, exclaiming enthusiastically—

"I will!" and, taking out a ten-pound note, she presented it to her demure admirer with a most heroic air.

"Sarah, I believe you now—this is a great proof of your sincerity!" unctuously pronounced Elijah Stock; and, as he slipped the note into his pocket, he imprinted a fervent kiss upon the hand that had bestowed it.

"I shall be able to do more, I have no doubt," observed Sarah, as in a flutter of delight she

sunk back again upon her sofa ; and then, as if her generosity could never end, she exclaimed—

“ But you have not emptied the box ; it is always full, now that Percy is gone away. I took it round yesterday to all the ‘ Sunday schools.’ That addition of the ‘ Negro children’ has been very profitable ; the children all understand that. They put in a halfpenny a-piece ;” and, as she spoke, Mrs. Percy produced from the drawer of the tea-table a good-sized box with two small slits in it. Above one was written, “ Missionaries and Enlightenment,” and above the other, “ Destitute Negro Children ;” which last had been an emanation from the brain of Mrs. Percy Linklater, and one of which she was not a little proud. The key of the box instantly made its appearance upon the watch-chain of Mr. Stock, who hastily filled his pockets with the contents of the coffer, ejaculating as he did so—

“ Blessed are they who give to the poor !”

"And those who collect should not be forgotten, I think," suggested Mrs. Percy with an insinuating smile.

"Sarah," quickly replied Elijah Stock, as he sat down upon the halfpence, "you are a worthy worker in a great cause, besides being a most enchanting female—one whom I respect and esteem—and may say I most truly love;" and, with a very tender expression of countenance, he pressed one hand of Mrs. Percy Linklater to his heart, while with the other she gently veiled her blushes.

At that moment, a loud ring at the door summoned Betsy once more from her retirement, and, after a due quantity of conversation in the passage, she came into the room and laid a letter upon the table.

"A letter for master, please, ma'am. The boy has been with it to Ailthorpe; but, as master was from home, and they didn't know where he was, he brought it here."

"Who can it be from?" anxiously exclaimed

Mrs. Percy, seizing upon the letter the moment that Betsy had left the room.

"It is a very nice-looking letter," observed Mr. Stock, for want of any thing else to say.

And so it really was, and directed in a good but rather small hand ; but, as it had only a wafer seal, there was no intelligence to be gained from that. Mr. Stock, to whom all details concerning the Percy Linklater establishment were interesting, seeing that he managed to live by what he could extract from Mrs. Percy, and that he hoped in time materially to increase his gains, narrowly watched her falling countenance as she gazed upon the unwelcome letter that had disturbed so harmonious a conference, and after a few moments he said, "It seems to me like a lady's hand."

"That is just what struck me," quickly replied Mrs. Percy; and then, shaking her hand and head, she added with her teeth rather

closed, "If I only thought it—if I was only sure of it!"

"But surely you have no suspicion?" cautiously suggested her friend.

"Yes—that is just what I have!" angrily replied the lady.

"My dear Sarah, you surprise me! Good heavens, what a horror! An unfaithful husband, and with such a wife!" and the eyes of Elijah Stock immediately sought the ceiling.

"My fate is truly a hard one!" cried Mrs. Percy, relapsing into the pathetic, and looking for her pocket-handkerchief. Mr. Stock had, however, sat down upon it, and it was buried under the halfpence; so she went on without it, and said with a deep sigh, "Yes—truly pitiable—most pitiable!" Mr. Stock was going to say something consolatory, but his curiosity got the better of his affection, and he timidly inquired—

"But have you no idea of the individual? Surely you may confide in me, Sarah."

"Yes—I feel that I may," replied Mrs. Percy tenderly.

"It is that nasty, abominable Lizzy Gibbs—I know it is!"

"And who is Lizzy Gibbs?" asked Mr. Stock with a puzzled look; for, being only a visitor at Whittington, or, as he chose to express it, "on a divine mission of mercy," he was not thoroughly acquainted with all its inhabitants.

"Why that impudent thing—that milliner that always sits at the window of the corner shop in Church-street! I have seen her peeping through the blind. But I'll expose her—that I will!" replied the angry lady, growing very red.

"But would it not be better first to make sure that you are right?" suggested the more calm Elijah.

"Just what I was thinking," cried Mrs. Percy, seizing the letter. "There can be no harm in opening the letter, if it is to do good."

"The end sanctifies the means," whined

Mr. Stock, meekly raising his eyes, and at the same time crumpling the ten-pound note in his pocket.

“It may prevent mischief,” apologised Mrs. Percy, “and perhaps, too, it requires an answer,” and as she spoke she opened the letter; but instead of the outpourings of affection from Lizzy Gibbs, as her fond fears had anticipated, the following words met the eye of the horror-stricken woman—

“Sir Edward Devereux presents his compliments to Mr. Linklater, and is sorry to inform him that, in consequence of what occurred last Wednesday, he cannot continue him in his employment. He will have the goodness, therefore, to give up the accounts and the house at Ailthorpe to Mr. Beardmore, the steward.”

With a shriek that was perfectly genuine, Mrs. Percy Linklater sunk back upon the sofa, and shut her eyes, for she was so faint she could scarcely see. Mr. Stock, having first possessed himself of the contents of the letter,

began fanning her violently with his hat, and Betsy, alarmed by the noise, came rushing in to see what was the matter. Just then the door bell rang again, and, leaving Mr. Stock to continue his friendly offices, she was forced to bestow her attention elsewhere, instead of remaining to satisfy the overwhelming curiosity under which she was suffering.

CHAPTER V.

“I TELL you that you can’t possibly see her!” were the first words that reverberated upon Mrs. Percy Linklater’s ear when recovering from her temporary insensibility; and as she sat erect upon her sofa, and tried to collect her thoughts, she heard the answer distinctly given—

“And I tell you, I must—and that’s flat!” The voice in which these words were spoken, had something short and sharp in its tone that seemed not unfamiliar to Mrs. Percy; but she was saved from any ruminations upon the subject by the worn-out Betsy, who, not having time to stand, as she said, “argufying” in the passage, put her head into the drawing-room to see how her mistress was going on, saying, as

she held the handle of the door tight in her hand to prevent the ingress of any other person—

“It’s Tim, ma’am—only Tim Sikes—and he wants to come in!”

“Oh, I cannot see him now!” replied Mrs. Percy, with a harassed look.

“That’s what I told him, ma’am; but he says he must come in. May be,” suggested Betsy, “he has something to tell.”

“Pray, who is Tim!” softly inquired Mr. Stock, who was always intent upon increasing his store of information.

“Tim’s the driver at the White Hart; a most respectable young man,” answered Betsy glibly, but with no very amiable glance at the hypocritical face of Elijah Stock. He had made her pay twopence for a tract, which she found out afterwards was one of those he bought for distribution at tenpence a hundred, and he was therefore no favourite of hers.

“A driver—a postboy!—I trust no accident has occurred,” he hesitatingly observed.

“Show him in, Betsy,” cried Mrs. Percy with Spartan fortitude; for, aware of the intimacy between her husband and the said Tim, she expected nothing less than to hear that he was coming to tell that her beloved Percy had broken his neck in a ditch. A vision of “Elijah Stock” and “perfect bliss” passed rapidly before her eyes, and she shaded them for a moment with her hand, as though to shut out the dazzling rays. Just then Tim walked into the room in his best drab coat, with large gold buttons, and shining top-boots, rather brown. He was a short, active-looking man, with red hair, and an expression of great good-nature on his broad face.

“Well,” said Mrs. Percy with dignity, “what have you to say to me, Tim?”

“If you please, I wanted to speak to you,” replied Tim hesitatingly, and looking at Elijah Stock.

“You may speak on then, Tim. Mr. Stock does not object,” said the lady, replying to the

glance of Tim, which was not, however, much more amiable than that of Betsy; for he, too, had been permitted to give his twopence for a tract.

"Certainly not," replied the worthy gentleman with alacrity.

"Am I to speak out?" asked the cautious Tim, still eyeing the itinerant reformer of morals suspiciously.

"Decidedly! say what you have to say quickly, and then leave us. Mr. Stock was just going to read to me one of the new lectures he is about to deliver in the town," replied Mrs. Percy, with a steadiness that surprised even Elijah himself.

"Lectures, indeed! well, that's queer!" said Tim, scratching his head, and as if talking to himself; and then, looking full into Mrs. Percy's face, he continued—

"Well, ma'am, the truth is, I'm come to beg your pardon."

"My pardon! and for what?" exclaimed the lady in surprise.

"For having just taken the bread out of your mouth, ma'am, and that's the English of it; and sorry I am, sure enough, but it can't be helped now; but I am ready and willing to do what I can towards mending the matter, and that's what I came here to say;" and poor Tim pulled out his large blue and white checked pocket-handkerchief as he concluded his lucid explanation, for there was a tear glistening in his generally bright and merry eye.

"What is it you mean? I can't understand you," said Mrs. Percy, with a shiver; for she was growing quite cold from a sense of a new impending danger, and, for a moment, even the letter of Sir Edward was forgotten.

"Well, here's the truth, ma'am, just as the thing fell out," answered Tim in a doleful voice, but gathering courage as he proceeded. "It was an accident from beginning to end; nobody intended it. You see, ma'am, as how your husband, Mr. Percy Linklater, is a fine sporting

gentleman—not a better four-in-hand driver in the whole county or the next. Well, you know, ma'am, he was always very civil to me—particular civil, knowing that I could tell a good horse from a bad. Well, ma'am—you see, ma'am, when he went to his new house, I suppose he was lonesome like, or there was no one there that could talk to him about driving, as I used to do here when he looked into the tap-room of a night; so he asked me just to step over to Ailthorpe and take an early dinner, and bring with me any one that could help him about getting a good team together. So I went over with Billy Jones, the driver at The Three Crowns at Allingford, and two or three more, and I'm sure I don't know how it was, but after a while we was all overtook," and Tim paused for a moment with a very sheepish look.

"You wretch—you don't mean to say you got drunk, and with my husband!" cried Mrs. Percy, promptly divining the truth, and grow-

ing livid with rage, and quite forgetting her "gentility."

"Well, ma'am, not exactly drunk: I can't say that, because I rode home on the old grey horse, and he stumbles dreadful, particular of a night. But we came along splendid, and I was back in my place, and was well able to drive the coach at eleven—never drove better in my life, so I couldn't have been drunk; no, nor nothing like it. But I was somehow in good spirits, as one may say, and I am afraid I talked a little too much to the gentleman that sat by me on the box. It was quite dark, so I couldn't see his face, and he had a shawl round it."

"And, pray, what is that to me? What do you come here troubling me for?" inquired the irate lady, very fiercely.

"Only, ma'am," answered Tim, with a cunning look; for he was not much conciliated by her manner in speaking to him, "that I happened to tell the gentleman every word that

the master, Mr. Percy Linklater, told to Billy Jones and me. Lord bless me! but how we did laugh when he let out all the secrets—how he was a tailor's boy, and you a tallow-chandler's daughter, and how his name was Peter and not Percy, and that he only called himself Percy to make the Earl of Glanberris believe he was a relation of his; but now, that he had got the ear of Sir Edward Devereux, he didn't care a pin for the earl. I couldn't help hearing all this, ma'am, you see; but I needn't have told it to the gentleman, particular as I didn't know him, but I heard since it was Mr. Devereux himself."

"You vile, impudent scoundrel, begone! I will listen to no more of your lies!" exclaimed Mrs. Percy Linklater, getting up in a fury, and pointing to the door as she spoke.

"It's all as true as gospel, ma'am," solemnly answered Tim.

"Will you leave the room?" vociferated Mrs. Percy with a menacing look, and apparently

quite forgetting that she had a champion sitting by her side.

“Yes, ma’am, I am going,” replied Tim, humbly. “I’m sure I meant no disrespect; but what I came to say was this—that as I got the driving of the coach by your husband’s getting a place, now that he has lost his place through me I am willing to make amends to him for it and give him up the coach. It’s fifty pounds a-year, I know; but he’ll do something for me when he’s able, that I know, too.”

“That will do!” said Mrs. Percy in a tone rather less savage, but without even thanking the poor man for his generous offer. She was thinking how to explain away his words, so as to efface the impression they must have made upon the mind of Elijah Stock. She could not afford to lose every thing in the world at once; and perhaps, of all the threatened losses, her admirer would be the most difficult to replace. He doubtless would be very much touched when he came to know the truth, and how she

was the victim of some vile conspiracy concocted between this man and her worthless husband. At present, however, Mr. Stock gave very little sign of emotion: he had been carefully brushing the crown of his napless hat ever since Tim began his discourse; but still more carefully attending to every word he uttered. The Percy Linklater consequence seemed on the decline; but he thought of his ten-pound note, and his pocket full of halfpence, and the large bag of them he had got at home, and was resigned. His six weeks' sojourn at Whittington had not been quite profitless.

A few moments' silence, during which Tim had remained standing in the middle of the room, twirling his broad-brimmed hat in his hand, had given Mrs. Percy full time to arrange her plans, and in a very different tone to that in which she had till now indulged, she said—

“You may go now, Tim. That will do. We are much obliged by your offer, but there will be no necessity for it: Mr. Percy Link-

later has other means of living except driving a coach. And remember, Tim, that you don't go about the town repeating all this nonsense. Gentlemen will do foolish things some times, you know. It was all a joke what Mr. Percy Linklater said to you that day."

"Well, I don't know," answered Tim, looking very wise; "but I'm thinking it wasn't much of a joke any how. At all events, it's no joke now; for the poor gentleman is crying his eyes out down there, at the White Hart!"

"What, here?—at Whittington!" exclaimed Mrs. Percy with a look of terror, and an involuntary glance at Elijah Stock, who forthwith buttoned his threadbare coat up to the throat.

"Yes, here, ma'am—in Whittington, safe enough. He'll be up here directly, I suppose. I left him sitting down in the tap; but he thought it better for me just to step up before him, and break the matter of the coach a little."

"Well—well; we have heard all about it!" replied Mrs. Percy, impatiently. "Here, Betsy, take away the tea-things—be quick!" she added, hastily opening the door in order to accelerate matters.

"Yes, ma'am," observed Tim, who still stood his ground; "but I don't think you quite understand. The fact is, the matter is as good as settled. The gentleman says as how the agency business doesn't suit him—so he's made up his mind to accept of my offer, and gave me a five-pound note for the bargain."

"What nonsense are you talking!" said Mrs. Percy affectedly.

"It's all as true as gospel!" again affirmed Tim, and, with a very unceremonious bow, he turned on his heel and departed.

"Was ever woman so unfortunate?" said Mrs. Percy in a tearful voice, and turning an appealing look upon Mr. Stock as Tim disappeared.

"Very trying—very disagreeable indeed; but of course it's all a joke!" replied the ac-

commodating Elijah, taking the hint that had been thrown out so skilfully.

"Oh, of course; but the vulgarity of it is so shocking!" observed the lady languidly.

"I trust it may all be arranged conformably to your wishes," said Mr. Stock, getting up precipitately; "and that, on my return, I shall find you all smiles again, as usual."

"Your return—you are not going away!" cried Mrs. Percy in alarm.

"Only to Allingford for one day to meet some friends!" was the calm reply of the ingenious Stock, who meant to decamp that night for London, rightly guessing that the ten-pound note in his pocket was the last he could manage to extract from Mrs. Percy, now that her husband was coming back.

"You will not be longer away, I hope," said Mrs. Percy, tenderly.

"Oh, no—perhaps not even so long!" responded the gentle admirer.

"Take, then, this little keepsake; it will re-

mind you of me. The work and the design are both my own," said the lady with a deep drawn sigh; and, taking a folded paper from the table-drawer, she produced a hideous pair of Brobdignag-looking slippers, worked in worsted. The ground was bright red, and on the front of one was a cross, and on the other a prayer-book, in beads of black and gold.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Elijah, as he took the hand of Mrs. Percy tenderly in his own.

"A *souvenir*——" began Mrs. Percy, looking up in his face with tears in her eyes, when Betsy, hastily opening the door, exclaimed—

"There's master coming along the street, ma'am—there, along with Tim—they are coming in, I declare—just a-crossing the street."

"I sha'n't like to meet him, as I haven't the honour of knowing him!" exclaimed Elijah, forgetting his sanctimonious tone, and darting into the passage.

"The back-door is open," kindly suggested

Betsy, as she saw him looking about apparently for the means of escape.

“This way, if you please !” but he did not require any showing, for, ere the words had passed her lips, he had disappeared. Mrs. Percy, too, was no longer visible. She had glided into her bedroom to take off her smart cap and gown; and Betsy shrugged up her shoulders and said nothing. It was all no business of hers; but she inwardly determined to make up the twopence she had paid for the tract out of the weekly bills. She had not, however, the opportunity of so doing; for, ere the week had elapsed, Mr. and Mrs. Percy Linklater, finding their position no longer tenable, quietly vanished from Whittington, in order to seek better fortunes elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a heavy day to Leonora when she found herself at last obliged to give up The Cliffs to its new owner, and set out upon the undefined journey which she deemed so indispensable. But she had lingered already too long in her old home, and the temper of her husband had not improved in consequence.

The forced solitude to which he found himself condemned, was a source of perpetual vexation to him. It was not that he did not like being alone with Leonora, for her society had infinite charms for him: she amused him, and occupied his very vacant mind; and she was altogether so superior to any other woman that he had ever seen, that he fancied at first that he never should grow tired of admiring her.

But, like every thing else, he did grow tired of it; or rather he grew tired of having no one to talk to about her. He had imagined that his elopement would have been attended by very great *éclat*, and that when the first burst of paternal anger, which he certainly expected from Mr. Stratford, should have subsided, he and Leonora would have been sought for by every one—would have been the rage, in short; and his vanity was extremely flattered by the prospect. But when he found how much the reality differed from the glowing ideas he had so fondly cherished, all his spirits vanished.

The very serious manner in which the conduct of Leonora had been visited upon her, not only mortified him to the greatest degree, but lowered her in his eyes; and the constant complainings to which it gave rise, were too near reproaches to be pleasant. Altogether, his life at The Cliffs was a very disagreeable one: if he stayed at home, he had to endure the eternal lamentations of Leonora; and, if he went out,

he encountered nothing but cold looks or averted eyes. The contempt of the great world, as shadowed forth by the little world of Whittington, was more than his philosophy could endure; and the letter of Lady Glanberris, which, of course, was put forward as the first of grievances, caused him very great alarm.

Could it be possible that his wife was to be excluded for ever from that world whose smiles he coveted quite as much as she did? The probability of so great a misfortune had never once occurred to him, and he was overwhelmed by it. In vain he supplicated for permission to consult his brother upon the subject; Leonora positively refused even to tolerate the idea. Her secret object being now to create a strong feeling of distrust in the mind of her husband towards Sir Edward, in the hope of separating the two brothers completely, she made it an especial point that no communication whatever should take place between them. Added to this, nothing could be farther

from her wishes than making herself the subject of conversation between Sir Edward Devereux and Lady Glanberris; for a secret terror ever filled her mind when she remembered how entirely she was in the power and at the mercy of her brother-in-law. It almost reconciled her to the idea of leaving England, so great was her desire of escaping the vigilance of those by whom she was surrounded. Otherwise, a tour upon the continent with such a companion as Stuart Devereux, did not promise to be either instructive or amusing.

His society was certainly somewhat wearisome; but Leonora did not even try to induce him by her superior tact to correct his faults, nor did she in the slightest degree value the few good qualities he possessed: he might be kindness itself, but she never perceived it. She never looked at him in any other light than that of being the man she had been forced to marry to shield herself from public disgrace, and one by whose social position her own could be ad-

vanced ; and, therefore, a cold and forced civility was all that enlivened the new life of Stuart Devereux, instead of the raptures of devotion he had been led to expect. But, in order not to disenchant him too suddenly, Leonora did not fail to attribute her very variable spirits and temper to the constant annoyances she suffered, and particularly from the conduct of Sir Edward, which she did not hesitate to denounce in the strongest terms.

It certainly did seem to Stuart Devereux that his brother was over harsh—even cruel in his condemnation of Leonora ; but he had been for so long accustomed to look up to Sir Edward with almost filial reverence, that he did not dare to remonstrate with him upon the subject. He had also other reasons for its being imperative that he should be on good terms with his brother. All this made it extremely difficult and painful for him implicitly to obey the mandate of his beautiful wife, “that he should hold no communication at all

with the person who had so grossly insulted her;" and the consequence was that he only feigned to obey it, and a hurried visit, when ever he could absent himself on plea of business, had more than once been paid to Atherston Castle. It was upon the occasion of one of these stolen interviews that had occurred the marvellous revelation of Tim Sykes, the driver of the coach, which had led to the discomfiture of the Percy Linklaters. Sir Edward had instantly taken measures to disencumber himself of so disgraceful an appendage; and Lord Glanberris, who was very soon informed of the untimely end of his female correspondent, merely smiled a quiet smile. He had had his doubts from the first moment, and he thought with pity on the hard fate of the next individual upon whom she might fasten, when he remembered the bullying form of her petitions, and the daily half-quire of paper with the knot of blue ribbon in the corner.

The only house at Whittington to which

Mr. Devereux was permitted to go, was the Hermitage. Leonora had never gone there herself since the death of her father; but, as Belinda White was the single person who had had courage to encounter the torrent of public indignation for her sake, and to call upon her, she conceived she could not do otherwise than appear to be obliged; though her proud heart swelled at the idea of acknowledging the obligation. And so Stuart Devereux, after he had written his letters and taken his daily walk with his wife, sometimes enjoyed the great amusement of riding up to the Hermitage, in the hope of finding Belinda White alone; for his aversion to the society of Whittington had increased a thousandfold. It was not very often that he could succeed in his object, as her drawing-room was like a club-room for all the ladies of the village; though generally presided over by Captain Blair, who, report said, had a secret longing to become more than a constant visitor at the house of Belinda White.

It was a very clever idea, if it really was entertained by the captain; but, unfortunately, his stiff black stock, and well buttoned up blue frock-coat, had no charms for Belinda White. She was a voluntary and most determined old maid, and, until lately, had been probably the happiest in the world. She had, however, for some time appeared a good deal altered: her spirits had become depressed more than she would have been willing to allow. The death of Mr. Stratford had not only deprived her of a friend whom she liked and valued extremely; but her own thoughts filled her with sorrow, for imagining that, although innocently, she had been indirectly the cause of the misfortune she so much deplored, the idea was a perpetual source of misery and self-reproach to her. It all arose from the defect that she was conscious of possessing, and fancied she had corrected—the inveterate love of talking. If it had not been for this, the tragical event, as she thought, would never have

happened; for it was by her counsels Leonora had been induced to marry Mr. Devereux, and it was also owing to her extreme communicativeness, upon the night of the ball at Winton, that Sir Edward had been apprized of his brother's intentions. It was certainly, by her good-natured congratulations upon the subject, that his eyes had been first opened to the game Leonora was playing; and it was upon some observation of his which did not sound favourable to her wishes, that Belinda had conveyed her own fears to the ear of Leonora, in that fatal whisper concerning "the secret," which had done so much mischief, and led her to believe her position to be much more dangerous than it really was. Of this latter fact, Belinda was, of course, completely ignorant; but the former were sufficient foundation for very serious reflections, and a great deal of remorse.

Now, as serious thought and remorseful feelings were usually strangers to the breast of Belinda White, she suffered consider-

ably from them. Her kind good heart could not recover from the blow it had received. All that she could do to repair the mischief she had caused was of very little avail. She could not defend the conduct of Leonora, though she grieved over her sufferings; and her numerous attempts to induce others to overlook it had been so totally vain, that she found herself forced to abandon the hope. Her own countenance and support was all she could give; and that little was given freely, regardless of the condemnation that it brought upon herself.

All these painful feelings had materially altered the happy existence of Belinda White. A cloud had come over her hitherto sunny path, and did not seem likely to clear away from it; for, had not memory kept up her busy work, the constant expression of public opinion, upon the late events at Whittington, would have amply supplied its place. The theme was far from being exhausted, and every word that was uttered was as a covert reproach

to her. This constant secret vexation was not long in producing visible effects. The once joyous Belinda White became gloomy and silent : her face lost the radiant look which had been so long habitual to it, and she stayed more at home than she had ever been known to do. Occasionally she might be seen trotting about the roads with her pattens and umbrella as of yore ; but her step was more staid, and her look less glad. And so her life went on, until, one day that she called at The Cliffs, she found that the journey was finally decided on, and that Mr. and Mrs. Devereux were going away.

This intelligence certainly relieved her from a great deal of anxiety. She was one of those persons who always expect great benefits from time and change of abode, without knowing exactly why ; and upon this occasion particularly ; she did not stop to analyze the feelings that made her extremely glad to hear of the approaching departure of her friends. She only knew that she found great comfort in the

intelligence, and firmly resolved to profit by the suffering she had experienced, and, for the future, not to talk so much about other people's business. Kind-hearted, however, to the last, she went to The Cliffs the evening before the day on which the travellers were to set out, and bade them a friendly farewell.

The next morning, lonely and disgraced, Leonora quitted her former home; and with feelings and recollections that were little to be envied. How very different was this silent and almost stealthy departure, from the bridal pomp and display she had once so confidently anticipated!

CHAPTER VII.

It was nearly three months afterwards, that Mr. and Mrs. Devereux began to think it was time to fix upon some place of abode wherein to pass the remainder of the winter. Ever since their departure from The Cliffs, they had been wandering about, generally from one watering-place to another; but the deep mourning of Leonora prevented her from enjoying even such gaieties as the places that she visited might have afforded. As she and her husband never went out, or paid any visits, their society was not likely to be much sought after; and thus their everyday life abroad, differed very little from that which they had led at Whittington during the two months they had remained there.

This monotonous existence—although he

still fancied himself very much in love—was more galling even to Mr. Devereux than it was to Leonora. She could occupy herself with her own thoughts, but her husband had no such power : he never thought at all—that is to say, seriously reflected—except upon two subjects, his money and his hunters. How to get money enough to go through the ensuing year, had certainly been his annual meditation for some time past; but his hunters were a matter of still deeper anxiety to him. His darling passion was hunting; he had some extremely fine horses, and a hunting establishment that would have been very suitable to a man with a good fortune, but which was quite incompatible with an income such as he possessed. It certainly did seem rather hard to ruin himself for nothing; and Stuart Devereux had fervently hoped, that in a little while Leonora would grow tired of travelling, and consent to take up her residence, at least for a short time, at his very pretty hunting-box in Leicestershire.

Leonora, however, had no such intention. She had made up her mind not to go back to England until she had changed her mourning, as she fancied attention would be then less attracted towards the events connected with her marriage, and that she might make her *début* without being exposed to the very mortifying reception which had attended her first appearance at Whittington as a bride. This arrangement might suit her plans; but, as they were of course not revealed to her husband, he consented with a very bad grace to prolonging his stay abroad.

The health of Leonora, which was not quite so good as it had been, was the plea put forth for the necessity of spending the winter and spring in some country that could boast of a better climate than England. After a great many discussions upon the subject, it was at last agreed that Naples should be the favoured spot where they were to remain; and to Naples accordingly they went, and established them-

selves very comfortably, and much more luxuriously, than their means permitted. Leonora was at first enchanted with the place, which she had never seen ; but, as Mr. Devereux had already been at Naples, there was nothing new enough in its scenery to interest him. He, therefore, in a very short time grew exceedingly tired of his life ; and his incessant lamentations about his hunting, and the hardship of being forced to live abroad, became so utterly wearisome to his wife, that she was forced to relax a little from the rule she had laid down, and permit him to emerge from the total seclusion to which he had been so long condemned.

There were a great many people just then at Naples—the society was very good ; and besides many foreigners of note, who were not all strangers to Mr. and Mrs. Devereux, there were several English families passing the winter there with whom they were acquainted. Amongst others, Sir John and Lady Markland, whose country-house was not far from Whit-

tington, were comfortably established in a fine house on the Chiaja, and rejoicing in all the Britannic luxuries of six grown up children, with servants, carriages, and horses in proportionate profusion. It was, therefore, not difficult to find sufficient society to take away the feeling of loneliness of which the unhappy Stuart complained so bitterly; and he had very soon arranged for himself a variety of innocent pastimes, which, by occupying his attention, gave him less time to complain, and relieved Leonora of his constant presence.

Thankful, however, as she felt for the comparative tranquillity and independence she enjoyed during these temporary absences of the still adoring Stuart, it is doubtful whether Leonora would have permitted him to be thus frequently out of the reach of her vigilant eye, had it not been for the accidental circumstance of Sir John and Lady Markland's being at Naples at that moment. They had left England some time previous to her marriage, and she was not

aware of their place of abode, until she had met them accidentally in the gardens of the Villa Reale, a day or two after her arrival, and been civilly if not warmly recognised by them. This fact might become one of great importance to her, and she resolved not to throw away any opportunity that should present itself of recovering the position she had lost. The protection of the Marklands, if well managed, might be of infinite service; and she was too well acquainted with their particular failings, not to be able to make them in some degree subservient to her own designs.

Lady Markland was not a woman of good family; neither was Sir John a man of ancient lineage, as he would fain have had it supposed: he was only an excessively rich man, whose father had been made a baronet; but why or wherefore nobody exactly knew. Perhaps in the past generation there might have been persons who could have given a shrewd guess upon the matter; but that, with other myste-

ries of the epoch, had passed away, and all that remained was Sir John Markland of Allingford Park, who went to the county races with six horses and a dozen outriders, and his wife to the county ball with a diamond necklace as large as a row of half-crowns. All this, and many other peculiarities of the same nature, he considered proper for a man with a rent-roll of eighty thousand a-year; and, perhaps, it was admissible as far as the mere question of "a right to spend money" might extend: but as a matter of good taste it was not quite the same.

Sir John and Lady Markland were essentially vulgar people, although polished up and educated to the highest degree: still it would not do. Their money, and the importance they attached to it, constantly glittered obtrusively when it was only meant to gleam in a quiet repose. Every thing they did was too well done to be natural: there was an effect of riches in the very atmosphere in which they floated, which immediately called atten-

tion to the source from which their grandeur was derived. Had they not eternally gone forth to the world with their eighty thousand a-year blazoned on the panel of their carriage, they might have done better; but tact and taste, and the refined simplicity and habits of high birth and station, are not learnt at schools; and in the nameless arcana that alike defy imitation or explanation, the whole family of the Marklands were decidedly wanting.

Their small deficiencies, however, did not amount to any absolute faults; and the new people were admitted amongst the old, with a kindness and cordiality that would not stoop to criticise and pick out such little failings, but accepted them as a matter of course. The very consciousness, however, of this generosity being exercised spontaneously towards them, had something a little galling in it to the insatiable pride and ambition of the Marklands. It implied, even though it removed, the boundary between them and others; and, short of

aspired to reign over all. How that pale, quiet, simply dressed Lady Glanberris, with her soft voice, meek blue eyes, and somewhat sleepy manner, could have acquired the ascendancy she possessed, and also the reputation for beauty she enjoyed, was not to be divined.

Lady Markland, who secretly contrasted her with herself, did not think her at all good-looking or attractive; but, of course, she publicly gave her credit for these and a thousand other advantages and virtues, for the voice of society was in her favour; and Lady Markland, always professing her independence, liked particularly to sail with the stream. She very skilfully, therefore, disguised her feelings; and, instead of attempting openly to cope with, she rather preferred gliding through the world side by side with the bright planet whose glory she could not deny. She therefore effected the greatest intimacy with Lord and Lady Glanberris, and all their family, and pretended never to enjoy any thing without them; although, in reality,

she not only disliked, but was exceedingly afraid of Lady Glanberris, whose manners at least differed so widely from her own.

All this gave her a great deal of trouble, and necessitated a thousand manœuvres. She kept an incessant watch upon all the proceedings at Winton Park, in order, as nearly as possible, to assimilate those of her own house to them. Her daughters had the same masters as Lady Alice; her sons, who were older, were advised to take Lord Glanberris for their idea of perfection; and she herself, as much as her natural flashy taste would allow, endeavoured to imitate in manner, tone, and dress, the model lady, to whom every one looked up as to an authority not to be questioned.

So much practical reform was not without its effect; and Leonora, who was perfectly aware of it, and all the peculiarity of Lady Markland's disposition and position, resolved to turn both to account, if she possibly could accomplish it. She had not many English acquaintances, and

no very powerful friends, in consequence of her whole life having been passed abroad. A little while back she would have scorned the protection of a Lady Markland, but now that circumstances were altered, she condescended to be civil. Lady Markland, on her side, had been passively so upon their first meeting ; but having, since then, had ample time for reflection, she was sorely puzzled how to behave. Of the whole history of Leonora and her marriage, she knew but the outline, and, to do her the justice, she most unhesitatingly condemned her conduct ; but her love of great people lulled her principles into a gentle slumber, in which she resolved to let them remain until further information should direct her in her course.


A few days after the arrival of Leonora, Lady Markland had despatched more than one carefully worded epistle to the neighbourhood of the far off, tranquil Whittington, in order to discover in what light the elopement had been viewed, and, above all, what Lady Glanberris

had said and done upon the occasion. By the answers she expected, she fully intended to be guided; and in the mean time, as fortunately Leonora did not go out, there could be no harm in receiving her husband, who of course they did not wish to affront. Sir Edward Devereux was much too important a personage in the county to run the risk of annoying him, especially as all the Misses Markland had been now some time grown up; so, as soon as it was found that Mr. Devereux did not insist upon sharing the seclusion of his wife, he was received with open arms; and Leonora was suffered to take her own way and play propriety at home, at which the three young ladies secretly sneered: staying at home was to them synonymous with being in prison. The society of their brothers was, however, a great resource to the idle and uninterested Stuart Devereux. In England he would not have thought them worth speaking to: and, in fact, they were not particularly lively or attractive; but they had

plenty of horses and carriages, which conduced to his amusement, and, above all, they had plenty of money: some of which he fully intended to borrow before he left Naples—a system to which, as many of his friends could have borne witness, he always most steadily adhered.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW weeks had passed over, and made no very material alteration in the life of Leonora; except that, as her husband found more amusement abroad, her moments of repose and solitude considerably increased. At the end of this time, however, the manner of the patronising Lady Markland towards her underwent so complete a change, that Leonora did not require to be told what had occurred. She was aware that Lady Markland had received sundry letters from her country neighbours in England, for Mr. Devereux had mentioned the fact; and, as his inventive powers were not great, she knew she might give tolerably implicit credence to the bare recital of facts which formed his chief



conversation. As he now went regularly to Sir John Markland's every day after dinner, Leonora was asduly informed of every thing that took place in the house. The impression of "coming ill," with which she heard of the arrival of numerous letters from England, including a very long one from Belinda White, was too surely verified. A day or two afterwards she met Lady Markland almost opposite to her own door, but she turned from her with a bow so slight and cutting, that Leonora felt as if all her blood had rushed to her cheeks. And yet she was far from divining how little had been said against her by any of the correspondents of Lady Markland, who had in reality seemed excessively cautious in their replies to the great lady's very pointed questions, and merely wrote in general terms upon so delicate a subject.

Poor Lady Markland would have remained scarcely better informed than the arrival of Leonora had found her, had it not been for the

letter of Belinda White; and, although this also bore an impress of caution that was very unusual to the writer, it ended by disclosing the important fact in which the stiff bow that Lady Markland had bestowed had its origin. Belinda White could neither say nor write an ill-natured thing; but having been asked the question in plain words, as to "whether Lady Glanberris had received Mrs. Devereux or not," she thought herself bound to reply, and tried to soften the painful truth as well as she was able. She merely said, "that she believed Leonora had not seen Lady Glanberris or any one since her father's death;" leaving the reason unexplained. She had, however, told enough for Lady Markland, who forthwith issued an order to her three daughters not to hold any communication with the delinquent Leonora, whose acquaintance she meant to decline; but not suddenly, or too immediately, as that might entail upon them the loss of Mr. Devereux,

who was of great use in making up Sir John's rubber and filling a vacant place at the dinner-table.

For these good reasons, Leonora was to undergo the process of being gradually dropped into oblivion; a process which she resolved to avoid as much as possible, by secluding herself still more than usual. It was, however, a deep mortification to her to be thus foiled in her plans. Go where she would, it seemed as if the consequences of her sin must still follow her; and she began to shudder at the prospect before her, though the buoyancy of her spirit still bade her hope. As she did not go out any where at Naples, the coldness of Lady Markland was not likely to be observed; and in due time other events might arise, which would divert the attention of her friends and allow her to glide back into her place in the world.

A little comforted by this reflection, Leonora, now forced to lead a more domestic life than

she had ever done, set about arranging for herself a series of occupations which should prevent her time hanging heavily on her hands. This was not difficult to one possessed of every variety of accomplishment; and, although with a somewhat listless spirit, she continued to persevere in her plan, until habit had somewhat reconciled her to her change of existence.

Other thoughts and hopes, too, now came mingling with the cares of the world; for, before very long, she might expect to become a mother, and visions of a more tranquil nature began to take the place of the soaring aspirations in which she had hitherto indulged. At no period since she had quitted Florence with her father, had Leonora ever been so free from immediate anxiety and fear, as during the first few weeks of her stay at Naples. But this comparative peace of mind was not to endure. Her crimes were of too deep a dye for the spirit of avenging justice to slumber long;

he must awake and walk abroad, and whisper into the ear of the hard and unrepenting sinner, "The wicked shall not prosper upon the earth."

CHAPTER IX.

ONE of the new habits to which Leonora had grown accustomed during the half-solitary life she had imposed upon herself, was that of walking out very early in the morning. Mr Devereux, who always found his day a great deal too long, contrived to shorten it by never emerging from his dressing-room before twelve or one o'clock ; when, arrayed in his cachemire suit, he would lounge over his breakfast-table for at least an hour or two. After that, he had to dress for the day, and pay sundry visits ; so it was not surprising that he had, as he always complained of having, " no time for any thing." As these habits of indolence, on the part of her husband, suited very well with the habits of independence upon her part,

which Leonora meant to establish, she took no measures to correct them, but quietly pursued her own way. That way, however, was destined not to remain long undisturbed.

One morning, as she was taking her usual walk by the seaside, she observed that, in whichever direction she turned, she was constantly followed by a woman, who seemed attentively watching her. There was nothing very remarkable about the appearance of this person: she was short and rather fat, young and tolerably good-looking, with black hair and eyes, and rather sharp, well-defined features. It was a face that never would have attracted attention in a crowd; and yet, from the fixedness of its gaze, Leonora felt spellbound every time its owner passed and repassed her on the walk. Leonora was too well accustomed to the glance of admiration, which her marvellous beauty elicited from almost every passer-by, to mistake the look of this woman for any tribute to her charms. It was the serious, anxious glance

of a person who had an object of more importance in view than the mere gratification of an idle curiosity. She seemed to be examining Leonora from head to foot, and yet afraid that her movements should be observed; for she constantly looked back, as if in anticipation of being followed by some person.

Leonora, surprised at her scrutiny, began to examine her in her turn, and then she remembered having seen the woman before when she had been out walking—she recognised her by a peculiarity in the shape of her black merino dress, which she happened to have previously remarked. The recollection of having passed her upon the walks, which were daily crowded with people, did not, however, much enlighten Leonora as to her name or object in thus watching her; but, as she did not attach any very particular importance to the circumstance, it was more, as Stuart Devereux would have said, “for something to do,” than from any other motive, that, as she sat down

upon a bench at the far end of the walk, she kept her eyes fixed upon the stranger. She remained thus for a considerable time, and one by one she saw almost all the habitual early risers, having inhaled a sufficient portion of the fresh sea-breeze, betake themselves to their homes. The walk was almost deserted, and Leonora also was beginning to think of going home, when the woman rapidly approached her, and said, in very good English, though with a foreign accent—

“I hope, madam, you will forgive my speaking to you ; but I have something to say very particular, and I want to see you alone.”

“To see me !” exclaimed Leonora, in surprise ; “what can you have to say to me, who am a stranger here ?”

“It is true—I have something very important to say,” replied the woman, in a decided tone.

“Why, you do not even know who I am—no more than I know who you are !” said

Leonora, with a smile ; but half expecting some gross case of imposition.

“Yes, madam,” replied the stranger civilly, “I know very well you are Mrs. Devereux, and you were Miss Stratford—Leonora Stratford. Am I not right ?” and the frank smile with which these words were accompanied, did away with the impression which Leonora had conceived.

“Quite right !” she unguardedly replied ; “but what can you have to say to me ?”

“A great deal—but I cannot say it here. When can I see you at your own house ?” asked the woman, hurriedly.

“Why cannot you say what you have to say here ?” inquired Leonora, coldly, and again recurring to her former suspicion.

“I cannot—I dare not !” she said, looking round her in every direction ; “but I can come at almost any hour you name to see you ; only tell me quickly, for I must be gone.”

“Do you know where I live ?” asked Leonora.

"Perfectly!" and she named the house and street, and the very number of the rooms occupied by Leonora; who, seeing that she really had something to say to her, though she could not tell upon what subject, immediately replied—

"You may come to-morrow at this hour, or sooner."

"No! to-day, if you please, madam; do not put it off. I pray of you, let me come to-day!" and she joined her hands as if in entreaty.

"This evening, then, at nine o'clock," said Leonora, struck by the extreme anxiety of her manner, and imagining it was some interesting case relating to herself that the woman was about to confide to her; probably to ask her advice or assistance about her marriage, as had more than once happened to her before when resident in Italy.

"I will be there—and punctual; and thank you, madam. I will send in my name—Vandelli—Maria Vandelli is my name;" and, with a hasty gesture of adieu, the woman walked

rapidly away, but still looking all around her, as if she feared being pursued.

Leonora sat for some time ruminating upon what had occurred, but not attaching any great importance to the words the stranger had uttered. One thing, however, was very certain, which was that she must be alone if she intended to hear what the woman had to say; for it was very evident the stranger would not speak in the presence of a third person. She, therefore, cautiously avoided saying any thing to her husband about her, or their meeting that morning, and waited until he had gone to his whist, which was his usual habit of an evening; and then she desired that Madame Vandelli only should be admitted to her presence. She had not very long to expect her visitor; for, a few minutes after the appointed time, Madame Vandelli made her appearance.

On entering, she made a low and respectful bow; but, as soon as the servant who had ushered her in had left the room, she quickly

put her finger upon her lips, and, turning to the door, held her ear close to it, as if to assure herself that no one was near. The sound of the retreating footsteps of the man showed that he, at least, was not gifted with the usual amount of curiosity common to households; and, as soon as all was silent, she looked up and hastily scanned the apartment, as if to see whether it afforded any other means to those so inclined of overhearing her secrets.

"There is no danger," said Leonora with a calm smile, and replying to the alarmed looks of the woman.

"It is not for me," she said, and hurriedly approaching the sofa where Leonora sat. "It is for you—for yourself!"

"For me!" exclaimed Leonora, in astonishment.

"Yes—for you!" replied Madame Vandelli, almost breathlessly. "You are young, and beautiful, and rich. You must not be sacrificed; you must not be betrayed!"

•

"What do you mean?" said Leonora anxiously, as the woman actually paused for breath.

"I mean what I say—that you are on the point of being ruined; but I am a woman, and I pity you, and would help you if I could. Men have no pity—no hearts, except for themselves: they love nothing—only money—only to get money!" and she wrung her hands as she spoke.

"Do say what you have to say quickly and plainly," said Leonora, beginning to tremble; for she felt that something very unusual must be the cause of so much emotion in a stranger, if it was, as she said, entirely upon her account.

"I will—I will!" replied Madame Vandelli nervously; "you will be angry with me, madam—me, a poor ignorant servant. You will be furious that I dare to speak to you on such a matter; but I cannot help it. I must do it—it is to save you; and I would bless any one who tried to save a daughter of my own. I

know all about you and the Marchese Colonna before you were married." Leonora almost started from her seat at these words; but quickly recovering herself, leaned back upon the sofa, and sat silent and still as marble, and Madame Vandelli impetuously continued—

"Oh! do not hate me—do not drive me away from you! You do not know what is hanging over you—it is true—it is true!" and, sinking upon her knees before Leonora, she buried her face in the folds of her black dress.

"What is true?" faltered Leonora, in great alarm.

"That you are in danger, madam—in the greatest possible danger—not of death; but of exposure and disgrace!"

"I thank you," said Leonora, hoarsely. "I thank you for your good intentions; but I do not in the least understand you."

"Oh, madam!" replied the woman, waving her hands wildly; "I know what you mean, and I understand you. It is a hard thing,

I know, for one woman to confess to another. But let all that pass—it is too late for denial or concealment. If it was only my knowledge, you might be safe; but you are in the power of another. My husband knows every thing—and he has all your letters to the Marchese!”

“Impossible! what you say is impossible as well as improbable,” replied Leonora rather haughtily; for, in spite of her fear, she still imagined that the woman was trying to impose upon her.

“It is possible—it is true—I swear it!” she vehemently answered; and, taking a letter from her pocket, she held it up before Leonora, and continued in a low voice, and speaking very fast—

“Is that true? You see now, madam, whether it is true: this is but one of the letters which I got by accident—my husband, Carlo Vandelli, let it fall. He was servant to the Marchese Colonna, who on his death-bed gave him a packet of letters and a box to deliver to Sir

Edward Devereux, the young Englishman who had shot him in the duel. He delivered the box, but, I don't know what devil tempted him to keep the letters: he meant to give them to you—for a consideration—to sell them; but now that you are married, he means to take them to your husband. We are going to England; but he will not wait till then. This is the truth, madam—my conscience would not let me keep it from you. I have warned you—so, beware!”

“May I ask,” said Leonora, who, having recognised her own letter, now saw that the danger was indeed imminent and scarcely knew what she was saying, “how your husband could know that I was here?”

“It was in this way, madam. I am a laundress, and wash most of the fine things for the strangers here: he saw your name upon your beautiful pocket-handkerchiefs. Some have ‘Leonora,’ others only ‘L. S.,’ worked upon them; that was enough for him!”

"There may be others with the same name," said Leonora evasively, but her face was as pale as death.

"Oh, madam! Carlo is not easily deceived; and, besides, he made himself sure by inquiring in the house of the English gentleman he serves, Sir John Markland, who lives on the Chiaja."

"Sir John Markland!" echoed Leonora, more and more alarmed every moment.

"Yes, madam, my husband is now his servant, and we are going to England when the family returns."

"Supposing all you say to be true," said Leonora, now trembling from head to foot—"the letters are not of the least consequence; if indeed they are mine."

"If!" exclaimed the woman striking her hands together, and looking up wildly; "but that is not all! It is not only the letters, but my husband knows other things—things I dare not repeat—that I could not speak of; but he

will speak—he will tell all—he is violent, and vindictive, and avaricious—he will do any thing for money. Money is all he cares for in the world!” and as she spoke her voice faltered, and a tear glistened in her eye.

“Money!” echoed Leonora thoughtfully, and then she turned her eyes slowly to the face of her companion, and said calmly; “and how much money does he want?”

“Oh! a great deal—a great sum, madam! I know he means to ask your husband at least a thousand pounds; and he has a spite against *you*—he would ask you double.”

“And why a spite against me?” asked Leonora, anxiously.

“I never could find out the reason exactly; but he has some idea that you caused the death of his master—and Carlo adored his master. He thinks it was for you the Marchese and the English gentleman fought, and always says he must avenge his death. It is his fixed idea; and I thought it was so cruel. It was that

which first made me take an interest in you; and when I saw you, madam, so beautiful and so young, my heart bled for you—and you were English, too; and I love the English!” and the woman’s voice again trembled, and her eyes filled with tears.

“You have been in England?” asked Leonora, observing her emotion.

“Oh, yes! and I was to have been married there; but there is nothing there for me now—nothing but one cold grave!” and, as she said the words, the poor woman sobbed aloud.

And Leonora sighed too, and, rebuked by the genuine sorrow displayed, looked at the weeping Madame Vandelli with more interest and confidence than she had yet felt. She saw that her conduct towards her was the spontaneous act of a generous heart, softened by a sad—perhaps a romantic—recollection; and, moreover, she knew that, as far as the facts that would condemn her, the woman’s words were true; she had known it ere yet the letter,

lying open before her, had come to confirm her statement. She knew too well, that every thing that had been said was unhappily too true, and that she was upon the eve of being lost for ever. Should this tale reach the ears of her husband, he would never see her more; for she had, constantly denied having ever had more than a casual acquaintance with the Marchese Colonna, and Stuart Devereux was of a nature to which forgiveness is unknown.

Still, though convinced of her own danger, Leonora was too wily to acknowledge it; and, making a great effort to assume an appearance of calmness, she took up the letter from the table, and said to her informant, who still stood weeping before her—

“I thank you again, Madame Vandelli, for your kind intentions, and the interest you take in me, who am a stranger to you. Believe me, I know how to appreciate such goodness; but your husband has mistaken the case. Any letters of mine to the Marchese Colonna were

upon the most trifling subjects—you may see it by this one, which is merely an answer to some invitation I had received. Still, as it is disagreeable for a woman to have her writing seen in all directions, if you will ask your husband to name his price, I will buy the letters of him, since he wishes to sell them. You say he is fond of money.”

“He loves it as he loves nothing else !” replied the woman, bitterly.

“Then he will be glad to earn some so easily,” observed Leonora, attempting to smile, though her heart was sinking within her.

“Ah ! if it was only the letters !” sighed Madame Vandelli.

“When can you let me know ?” asked Leonora, without taking any notice of her exclamation.

“I expect my husband in three days—till then I had better not see you,” was the reply.

“How ! he is not here, then, at present ?” said Leonora, with a look of satisfaction.

“No, madam, he had a few days’ leave to be away. He wanted to go to Rome to see his friends before we leave Italy; but I am watched the same in his absence by his sister—brother and sister are one—always looking out for gain: Carlo is afraid I shall get money and not give it to him, so he watches every thing I do;” and the countenance of Madame Vandelli assumed the gloomy look it always wore when speaking of her husband. The woman was evidently unhappy at home, and Leonora immediately fancied that her present conduct was partly dictated by pique against her husband. But she only wronged a nature more noble than her own, and a heart that she could not understand, in persisting to allow suspicion to mingle with feelings that should have been all of admiration and gratitude.

“I think,” she said quietly, after a few moments’ pause, “that what you have proposed is the best. On the fourth day from this you will come here again, at the same hour, and let me

know what your husband wants. But can I trust him ? ”

“ I think you may, if he is sufficiently bribed. All depends upon that,” was the reply, accompanied by a desponding look ; and then Madame Vandelli, drying her eyes, folded her shawl round her, and said—“ I will leave you now, madam ; and, if we meet upon the walks, you will not think it disrespectful if I do not seem to see you—but the fact is, I dare not. I must be the first to tell my husband what I have done, or at least part of it ; and I think we may succeed. But I know him so well—he is such a fierce, intractable man, that I tremble for you. Oh ! why did you ever come here ? only for that you might have escaped for years ;” and, humbly kissing the hand that Leonora held out to her, Madame Vandelli glided from the room.

“ For years ! ” echoed Leonora in a low voice as the door closed upon her retreating visitor. “ Oh—not for days—for hours even—can I es-

cape ! When—when shall I be in safety or at rest ?” and she lifted her clasped hands to heaven for a moment, and then, leaning them on the table before her, she buried her mournful face upon them, and sobbed bitterly, in an agony of terror and of shame.

CHAPTER X.

THE disclosures of Madame Vandelli were enough to strike terror into the most undaunted heart; and Leonora, already harassed and weakened by constant watching and agitation, was some time before she could recover sufficient composure to decide upon the best course to be pursued. The most urgent necessity at the moment, was evidently to provide a sufficient sum of money to satisfy the cupidity of the person who, to all appearance, held her fate in his hand. This was a matter of great difficulty; for, with the exception of a few pounds, Leonora had not a farthing.

There was but one way for her to obtain the money, which was by the sacrifice of some of her jewels; and, painful as was this resource,

she saw clearly that it was the only one she could adopt. The large amount of the sum that in all probability would be demanded of her, increased her difficulty; for she might not find a purchaser able, even if willing, instantly to advance so much money. It was fortunate for her that three days were to elapse before the return of Carlo; for the impediments and delays thrown in her way, apparently by an adverse fate, were endless: and never had she found it so difficult to command her own time, so as to be enabled to prosecute the inquiries she was so desirous of making.

But, among all the petty vexations that seemed to start up on purpose to take up her time, none were so oppressive as the sudden fit of uxoriousness with which her husband seemed to have been seized, on remarking her pale cheeks and heavy eyelids. He actually followed her like her shadow, and it was only by her rising much earlier than even was customary with her, that she could escape from his inopportune

attentions. It was not, however, until the very day when the promised visit of Madame Vandelli was to take place, that she had concluded an arrangement with a jeweller, by which he generously offered something less than a quarter of their value for some very magnificent diamonds. There was, however, no alternative, and Leonora promised to give a final answer the next day as to whether she would accept of the offer or not. As the evening approached when the expected messenger was to arrive, the anxiety of Leonora redoubled. Her dread of hearing what was to be announced, was only equalled by the fear that her husband would mar the whole arrangement, by insisting upon remaining at home, as he had sometimes done before. One of his vanities was the delight of being supposed to be an extremely attentive husband, while, in reality, he was only selfishly exacting, and very tiresome.

Leonora, however, was determined that no

complaining upon her part should, on that particular evening, retain him by her side; and so she affected not only to have perfectly recovered from her late indisposition, but also to be in excellent spirits. They were, however, more hysterical than real; and when at length her artifices succeeded, and she saw Mr. Devereux comfortably departing for his whist, she felt as if her whole strength had utterly deserted her, and, hurrying to her room, she gave relief to her feelings in an uncontrollable burst of tears. It was not very often that Leonora wept; for she was not of the sensitive order of females, who shed tears upon every occasion. When, however, she did weep, it was with a violence that seemed as if it would rend her heart from her body. The urgency of her position, however, seldom left her time to indulge in any symptoms of weakness—her danger was always imminent before she was aware of it, and prompt decision and action, however painful or difficult, was one of the

chastisements entailed upon her by her sin. She was always flying from one extreme course to another—nothing for her could be peaceable or smooth.

With an effort, as the hour drew near, Leonora endeavoured to be calm. She did not wish that Madame Vandelli should observe in her manner any unusual symptoms of fear; but strength would not come at her bidding, and, as nine o'clock struck upon the little clock on her table, she felt as if a death-knell was sounding in her ears. She started up, hastily bathed her swollen eyes with water, and immediately repaired to her sitting-room, when she desired that the person she expected might be admitted. She waited long—very long, and yet nobody came. She grew very nervous; but did not know what to do. She had paced up and down the room, looked out in the balcony, and got up and sat down again at least twenty times. In the violence of her excitement she felt helpless, and shut up in

that strange room, and looked angrily round, as though the very walls were guilty of contributing to her discontent. How she loathed every item of the furniture and ornaments the room contained—the red damask curtains—the marble pillars and tables—the heavy gilded chairs: every inanimate object on which her eye rested, seemed to mock her with its tranquil repose! She wrung her hands as she looked upon the quiet around—she could have torn every thing to atoms in the irritation of her feelings, and the mad hope of making any thing partaker of her anguish and disquiet! But all was of no avail: her frantic impatience was unfelt and unseen—the moments glided calmly by—the same silence reigned around, and nothing came to her relief.


A whole hour went past—and then another; and a new fear now mingled with her woe. Her husband might return, and make the longed for yet dreaded interview impossible. Fortunately for her, this last anticipation was not realized.

It so happened that, at that very moment, Sir John Markland was undergoing the martyrdom of a run of ill-luck against him at whist; and Mr. Devereux, who was his adversary, had generously offered to give him his revenge, and settled down to another, or a succession of other interminable rubbers, while his unhappy wife was pacing her room at home in a state of maniacal excitement and distress. Her terrible suspense had now endured so long, that she felt all hope abandon her : there was surely no chance of her seeing Madame Vandelli that night. She sat down by the table, and clasped her hands over her eyes.

Her senses seemed to be leaving her, the throbbing in her head was so violent. She pressed her trembling fingers upon her temples, and endeavoured to collect her thoughts. They were not of much assistance to her; for nothing but a tangled web of difficulties was before her, which she was totally helpless to unravel. If Madame Vandelli should not


re-appear, she had no possible means either of compelling her to do so, or ascertaining the progress of the danger which she felt to be hanging over her. The chance of a farther solution of the mystery seemed to recede from her view, the more certain she felt that the woman had spoken the truth. How could she doubt it? Did not her own letter, lying before her, vouch for the correctness of the statement? With a shudder, she confessed to herself that she was totally at the mercy and in the power of these two persons, one of whom was represented as being mercenary in no ordinary degree.

As Leonora reflected upon the consequences that might ensue from a discovery of the truth, a cry was ready to burst from her lips. She who had not quailed at sin, felt maddened by the prospect of disgrace, and in her extremity—almost for the first time—her thoughts turned to heaven for pity, if not forgiveness, and she murmured a few words in prayer. She knelt down by the table



where she had been sitting, and prayed for mercy and for aid. In a little while she became more calm. Still the moments passed on, and no one came. It was very late, and she had given up all hope, when at last she heard footsteps on the stairs. She hastily shut the door of the room, which she had left unclosed in order the better to hear the approach of any visitor; and in another moment her own servant entered the room. He said nothing, but laid upon the table before her a letter which bore her address, and then quietly departed. With a trembling hand Leonora tore open the letter, which, as her fears had foretold, was from the person she had been so long expecting. It only contained these words—

“I cannot do as I promised and wished; my husband has returned, and is so furious at having missed the good offer you made, that he is like a madman. He has parted with the letters for half the sum to a friend of the Marchesa Colonna. He will not name the



person; but I have been beaten and locked up for, what he calls, interfering with his market. Farewell ! I would have helped you if I could. The only advice I can give you is to leave this place; you will at least gain time.—MARIA VANDELLI."

"Time !" exclaimed the distracted Leonora, crushing the paper in her hands as she spoke; "alas ! what does time bring to me but a succession of difficulties ? She is, however, right ! I must leave this—I must be gone, and instantly, or this fiendlike Italian will be upon my track. Time !" and, as she repeated the word, a glance towards the future showed her the full horror of her position. Reduced to poverty, solitary and despised, she must wander to and fro upon the earth for ever, helpless and alone, should she once lose her present position through the discovery, by her husband, of the villainous deceit that had been practised upon him. The consternation with which this idea filled her was so overpowering, that for

a moment she felt paralyzed by it. A rigid coldness seemed creeping through her veins, and she sat immoveable, with her eyes fixed upon the fatal letter before her. She could not have told how long she had thus remained; but all at once a light gleamed upon the paper that lay beneath her hand. She started, and looked wildly round; but her return to consciousness was hailed by no more fearful apparition than that of Stuart Devereux in his dressing-gown. He was standing behind her with a candle in his hand, his vacant face looking more than usually pleased; but there was some anxiety in his tone as he exclaimed—

“What, up still, Leonora? Really this is most imprudent.”

“I could not have slept, so I waited for you here,” replied his guilty wife, hastily concealing the letter, though not before his eyes had rested on the paper.

“If I had known that I would have come back sooner,” he said kindly; and, Leonora

calling up one of her sweetest smiles, answered softly—

“Oh, I would not for the world have kept you at home ! A poor sick creature, like me, is wretched company, I know.”

“I don’t mind that particularly. Another night I shall certainly not go out, if you are going to sit up till two o’clock in the morning. You will kill yourself ! ”

“I shall die if I remain here much longer,” said Leonora, sadly.

“What do you mean ? Are you ill ? Are you worse, my darling ? ” asked her husband, anxiously.

“I am ill—very ill ! ” she languidly replied. “I think it is the air of this place, or the heat, or the water. I cannot tell what it is, but Naples decidedly disagrees with me ; ” and she leaned back in her chair with an expression of pain and feebleness that was certainly not assumed, for she felt as if going to faint.

“Why, I thought you said the sea air did

you so much good, and that the life here suited you exactly."

"Not now—it did at first; but I am very unwell—in fact, growing worse every day."

"You don't say so, Leonora! How you frighten me! And you look so pale!" he said, anxiously.

"I cannot eat—I cannot sleep; I shall soon not be able to leave my bed," replied Leonora, languidly.

"Good heavens! do not say such a thing—what is to be done?"

"I am sure I don't know; and I don't much care," was the agreeable reply. "I am too ill to care about any thing."

"But, what would you like? What do you want? What do you think would do you any good?" said her husband, looking very much frightened.

"How can I tell?" she answered fretfully, and leaning her head upon her hand. "I think, perhaps, change of scene might do something.

I am so tired of every thing here, and particularly of this house. These horrible red curtains tease me so, and these great heavy tables—every thing looks so clumsy ;” and she gave a glance of disgust at every thing around her.

“It is only because you are ill ; it makes you irritable and nervous. I am sure this house is very handsome ; but we can easily get another, if you do not like it.”

“Oh, no ! they are all the same here !” she replied, with another look of aversion. “I think I should like a house in the country, or on the outskirts of a town.”

“Why not Leicestershire ?” kindly suggested her husband, whose thoughts had flown instantly to his stables.

“Oh, no ! certainly not ; I should be bored to death with fox-hunters. The very thought kills me, in the weak state I am in ; and, besides, there are no good doctors.”

“Plenty !” began poor Stuart ; but she in-

stantly checked him by an observation that she well knew would have more weight with him than any other.

"Quite impossible, my dear Stuart! I would not run such a risk for the world. After so much suffering, to have all our hopes disappointed from want of proper advice, would be too bad. No; I must stay in or near some large town, if we move from here."

"Where can we go?" he asked despondingly.

"Oh, any where! The world is very wide. But perhaps you want to stay here. If so, I could go alone, and you might follow."

"I want to stay here!" exclaimed poor Stuart, with a piteous look. "I never wanted to stay here at all—it was your choice! I should have liked Rome better, or Florence; but you would not go there. I am sure there is very little to be got by staying here;" and his face assumed rather a doleful aspect, as he recollected how very hard he had worked to obtain the little that he had that day realized.

After some scores of rubbers of whist, and innumerable civilities, he had won twenty pounds from Sir John Markland, and borrowed two hundred from his son.

“Suppose we try Paris !” exclaimed Leonora suddenly, as if the idea had only just struck her; “we might get a nice house in the Champs Elysées.”

“If it would not be very expensive !” replied her husband, rather sulkily; he hated Paris nearly as much as he did every other foreign resting-place.

“There are plenty of good doctors there; and besides,” she added, seeing how little consenting was the expression of her beloved Stuart’s countenance, “we should be so near home, you might run over for a week’s hunting at a time. It would be very little trouble—not half the fatigue of one good run.”

“But then I should have to leave you !” observed the affectionate husband, whose face had considerably brightened, since the dexte-

rous suggestion of Leonora had opened a more satisfactory view to him.

"Oh ! it would only be for a few days at a time, and I could bear that if I knew you were amusing yourself," answered Leonora, in her most winning manner.

"I really think it would be our best plan," she added, getting up and lighting her candle. "I certainly shall never be well here—that I am convinced of!"

"Of course your health is of more consequence to me, my darling Leonora, than any thing else; but we can settle it finally in the morning," said poor Stuart, recovering his usual vivacity as bright visions of red-coats and foxhounds danced before his eyes; and his wife looked back at him tenderly, the sweetest of smiles lighting up her beautiful blue eyes as she glided towards the door, and then disappeared.

CHAPTER XI.

LEONORA, as usual, accomplished her purpose, and a short time saw her established in one of the prettiest houses looking upon the Champs Elysées. The comparative safety in which she imagined herself, somewhat soothed the agitation under which she had so long laboured; but the terrible fear she had undergone at Naples, had given a severe shock to her health, and a long and dangerous illness was the consequence. Her youth, however, though perhaps less than the indomitable courage she possessed, at length enabled her to triumph over the physical ills by which she was bowed down, and she gradually recovered.

The life of Stuart Devereux was not much more agreeable in Paris than it had been in Italy. Although fond of great people, and tenacious of

their attentions, society had no charm for him. It was, on the contrary, a restraint; and, having thoroughly worn out all the more attainable amusements which a continental life affords, he very soon found himself once more in the unhappy position which seemed to be his natural state, "of not knowing what to do with his time."

If Leonora had been well, and able to go out, and display her wondrous beauty and matchless jewels to the admiration of the world, his vanity would have been gratified, and his idleness amused; but Leonora, immured in her own house, ailing and alone, could do little towards dissipating the *ennui* with which he was oppressed. It was, therefore, with the utmost delight that he listened to her, as she one day renewed the proposition she had formerly made, "of his running over to England for a week's hunting every now and then." He would never have ventured to insist upon it; but it was too tempting an offer to be refused, and, as the hunting season was soon drawing to

a close, it ended in every second Monday seeing Stuart Devereux at the covert side as regularly as the huntsman.

The pleasures of a sporting life were the only ones that truly interested him, and his heart burned with gratitude to the fair being who, by releasing him from her side, had partially restored him to his native element. His periodical returns to Paris were now less irksome to him; and he even condescended to interest himself in the races, steeple-chases, and whatever other imitations of English habits and pastimes were enlivening the city at the time of his visits. As he was really a good judge of such matters, his opinion was constantly asked; and this little show of deference flattered him amazingly, and reconciled him to the paucity of the sport.

In this way their lives passed on, until the interesting moment to which Leonora had so long looked forward arrived, when, to her disappointment, instead of the son

upon whose arrival she had so confidently counted, twin daughters made their appearance; a burden that the straitened circumstances, towards which their extravagant mode of life was rapidly urging them, rendered not particularly desirable. Little Alice and Mary, for so were the new-born treasures called, were, however, two beautiful little girls; and Leonora, as she bent over them, confessed to herself for the first time, that the holier feelings of affection might perhaps take their place beside those which the love of worldly wealth and splendour called forth. It was, however, but transitory this sudden gleam of better things upon that vice-stained and benighted mind.

With returning health and strength came back old desires. The vain longing for distinction, and a proud position in the world, which had led her on step by step, blazed forth anew as the prospect of a brilliant winter in Paris threw its tempting rays upon her path. It was true that she would much have preferred a season in

London, but that would follow in its course; and in the mean time her rubies and diamonds were hiding their lustre in the same monster casket in which they had so long reposed. It was time they should come forth and shine upon the world. These feelings, on the part of Leonora, were too much in consonance with the paltry vanity which formed so leading a feature in the character of her husband, to receive any check from him. If he was doomed to pass the winter, or the greatest part of it, in Paris, the splendour of his wife would at least ensure him attention, and excite the envy of his friends. It was with a childish feeling of delight that both he and his wife looked forward to their first appearance in society as married people. The more innocent allurements of her nursery dwindled to insignificance in the eyes of Leonora, as the dazzling vision of a Parisian winter's gaiety rose before her.

It was not long before this vision assumed the form of reality; and, to her inexpressible joy,

she found herself upon the opening of the season the cynosure of every eye, and the theme of every tongue. The triumph she had enjoyed at Florence was as nothing compared to the enthusiasm now created by her beauty; which was of a style that ensured her success upon the continent even more than in England. The marvellous grace which was added to the singular loveliness of her face and perfection of her figure, as well as her thorough command of foreign languages, increased the fascination of her society. She was flattered, sought for, and adored to her heart's content. Every thing she said and did was accounted perfect; her dress was copied, her air imitated, until adulation seemed to have reached its utmost limits.

This sparkling existence ought surely to have crowned the hopes and desires which had been the mainspring of all her actions. It was for this giddy whirl, for this proud pre-eminence in the flattering sunshine of the world,

that she had striven and had toiled—it was for this that she had made a marriage that she loathed—it was for this that her adoring father now slept in his cold grave! Ought she not to have been happy when the reward of such heavy sacrifices was obtained? And yet Leonora was far from happy: a feeling of dissatisfaction secretly mingled with her triumph, and constantly preyed upon her. She felt that her present glittering existence was but ephemeral, if unaided by some more solid support than she at present enjoyed. In the brilliant crowd that hovered in her steps, and showered smiles and applause upon her path, there was not, perhaps, one person who knew the real history of her marriage. The stranger eyes that beamed so kindly on her, might they not be turned to orbs of stone when the magnitude of her sin, and the condemnation in which it was held by the good and pure-minded, became generally known? By the vicious or the careless it might be overlooked ;

but, while a dissentient voice was raised against her, she felt her position incomplete and insecure. In spite of the apparent brilliancy of her life, many things had happened to her of an extremely mortifying nature. Amongst others, the conduct of her former friend, Lady Glanberris, gave her more pain and alarm than any other circumstance that had occurred.


Upon the birth of the twin daughters, Leonora, in the hope of conciliating, had written to Lady Glanberris to inform her that she had called one of them "Alice," and conjuring her, by the memory of former days, to retract or even modify the harsh sentence which had been pronounced against her, and allow Lady Alice to be godmother to the children. To this appeal she never had received a reply, and a fresh accession of sorrow, indignation, and fear, was added to her already tortured and excited feelings. The friendship, or even countenance of Lady Glanberris, was of more consequence to Leonora than that of any other person—partly from her great posi-

tion in the county to which her husband belonged — and partly from her intimate friendship with Sir Edward Devereux, whom Leonora looked upon as an almost implacable foe.

If any one had influence to soften the stern resolve of his unbending determination, it was Lady Glanberris, to whom he looked up with the reverence and affection of a child; and if, before long, his anger was not appeased, the consequences must become serious both to her husband and herself. Some very material aid would, as she well knew, soon become absolutely necessary. From the day of her marriage they had both been living as if economy was no object to them, and the embarrassment of a heavy load of debt naturally followed this reckless course. It was true, that some part of this debt was owing to persons who were not likely to proceed to any harsh measures for its recovery; for Stuart Devereux never scrupled to borrow from his friends; but this

was a very minor portion, and quite enough remained to cause the most serious alarm.

And yet, in this degrading and terrifying position, it was strange how very seldom money or expenditure was the subject of conversation between Leonora and her husband! The fact was, that each looked to the other for the certain means of salvation when the fatal day of reckoning should arrive. The only brother of an extremely rich man could not, as his wife imagined, be abandoned to penury; and a wife possessed of jewels of regal magnificence, would never, as her husband supposed, see him in distress, and refuse to sacrifice some of her finery in order to come to his aid. It was this happy state of self-delusion that caused the dangerous tranquillity in which they reposed, as far as pecuniary matters were concerned; but never were hopes more fallacious than those in which each indulged with regard to the other. Leonora was as unconscious of the firm determination of Sir Edward Devereux to



put a stop to the wasteful extravagance of his brother, as was the confiding Stuart that he possessed a wife whose ambition was only equalled by her avarice. She was perfectly aware that her husband wanted money, but she had not the slightest intention of coming to his relief by the sacrifice of a single gem.

Tolerably at ease, therefore, as far as her pecuniary prospects were concerned, Leonora continued her usual pursuits; and her countless bills were quietly consigned to the drawer of her writing-table. The season at Paris was at its height, and the constant round of amusement in which she lived occupied her time, leaving little leisure for reflection, even had she been inclined to indulge in it. As the days passed on, and at all events brought no apparent accession to her difficulties, the harassing oppression of the fear under which she had so long laboured had begun somewhat to abate, when all at once she was startled from her

comparative repose, by the receipt of intelligence which was very displeasing to her.

One evening, on the return of Mr. Devereux from some visits he had been paying, he brought with him the unwelcome news of the arrival of his brother in Paris, which was to be followed almost immediately by that of Lord and Lady Glanberris and Lady Alice Percy. It appeared, that for some time apartments had been engaged for the whole party at the Hotel Bristol, where Stuart Devereux had just had an interview with his brother. This latter circumstance of course he did not reveal ; but Leonora was too much overpowered by the consternation his words had caused, to pay any particular attention to his explanation of the manner in which he had become possessed of his intelligence.

It was the most simple in the world ; he having, while making some inquiry at the porter's lodge, seen a note brought in addressed to his brother. His delight was too vivid to be repressed, and he had instantly gone up to his

room ; and this stolen visit was perhaps the only moment of real enjoyment he had experienced at Paris.

It was strange how completely altered his sentiments towards his brother had become, since he had been taken, as it were, from under his wing: there was actually a yearning in his heart after the man whom he had formerly regarded with the small feelings of jealous spite. His marriage, however, and the appalling catastrophe which had followed it, had completely annihilated these feelings; and when he beheld the gentle forbearance of his brother towards him, and recollected how grievously he had offended him, they seemed to him not only ridiculous, but actually ungrateful and vicious. All that was good in the nature of Stuart Devereux had been awakened by the generosity of Sir Edward's forgiveness. He was aware how much that forgiveness must have cost him ; for he knew, though perhaps he could not understand, the stern-

ness of principle by which his brother's conduct was always regulated, and that a deceitful word or action was regarded by him with abhorrence. He felt that he had practised the grossest deception towards him, and yet the proofs of his anger had only been silence and gentle sorrow. There was something of almost maternal tenderness in this, and the heart of Stuart Devereux melted into tearful gratitude as he dwelt upon it.

How few would have acted as Sir Edward had done! A truly noble generosity will always awaken a corresponding feeling in a heart not totally corrupt: and the heart of Stuart Devereux was not wholly bad; it was only selfish and foolish, and had now been shocked into better feelings by an example he could not but revere. With true regret now he looked back upon the past—but; alas! it was not to be recalled. The whole of the remainder of his life was in his own power; but the year and a half that had elapsed since his wilful error, could neither be restored nor effaced.

All the atonement he could make to one who had ever showed kindness to him, was to try now to profit by his advice, and at least upon one point to correct the folly of his ways.

With a seriousness of which he would formerly have been incapable, Stuart Devereux now determined to show more delicacy towards his brother than had hitherto regulated his conduct; and from that day to cease the endless demands for money which he had hitherto unscrupulously made. Perhaps the glittering casket of Leonora might have somewhat supported him in the firmness with which he had adhered to this resolution; but the fact of his having done so was not lost upon Sir Edward, who, ever ready to attribute to others the same virtues he possessed himself, imagined that his foolish brother had at length repented of his extravagance and waste, and was really anxious to lead a new life. This impression, strengthened and confirmed, only added to the distressing feelings which a contemplation of his brother's

position always awakened in Sir Edward's mind. He looked upon him with gentle commiseration, as he would have done upon an erring child over whom punishment was surely impending ; for he felt certain that, sooner or later, disclosures must take place that would overwhelm him with shame and remorse.

CHAPTER XII.

THE presence of Sir Edward Devereux in Paris was a source of deep mortification to Leonora. She could not acknowledge a relationship of which she was so proud, without a tacit reflection upon herself; for she would be forced to admit that she and her distinguished brother-in-law were strangers to each other. The society then at Paris—at least the English fraction of it—was on far too limited a scale for her to hope that she might escape detection upon this point. In the circle in which she moved, every body was as well acquainted with the affairs of their neighbour, as she had found to be the case when, in former days, the more humble coteries of Whittington had galled her by their petty malice. And besides, how could she, the brightest star of the fashionable

world, hope suddenly to sink to oblivion behind the shelter of a crowd? She could not veil her splendour if she would; and the glittering position she had so sedulously endeavoured to win, must now be her bane instead of the glorious halo in which she had hitherto exulted.

So great were the vexation and apprehension with which these thoughts filled her mind, that her first impulse was to fly from the scene of her recent triumphs, and thereby avoid question or remark; but, after a little calm meditation, she relinquished this project in favour of one more consonant with her usual tortuous duplicity. She resolved to make her enemy bear the burthen of her own false position; and therefore immediately began to circulate a whisper, that the coldness of Sir Edward Devereux arose merely from disappointed love. With so many "dear friends" as she possessed, it was not difficult to diffuse this plausible tale both rapidly and extensively; and although each of her fair auditors who

could "look upon this picture, and on this," severally wondered at her bad taste in preferring the younger to the elder brother, yet the story gained sufficient credence to enable her boldly to confront the observation which her singular position with regard to Sir Edward could not fail to attract. The partial success of this skilful manœuvre, however soothing to the alarm of her self-love, was far from restoring Leonora to the same state of enjoyment in which she had revelled before the arrival of her brother-in-law. The intoxication of her brilliant success was over; it had yielded to the sobering effects of alarm and misgiving. A constant secret annoyance gnawed her heart, and made her somewhat indifferent to the general homage which was so powerless to remove the real cause of her anxious fears.

Sir Edward firmly maintained his decision of never acknowledging her presence, and, although they were frequently included in the same select circle, it seemed to him no effort ab-

solutely to ignore the existence of a person he so thoroughly despised. The manner of Lady Glanberris was not much more encouraging; and, if it had not been that, now and then, a tearful glance from the bright eyes of Alice told her that the memory of former days was still cherished, Leonora might readily have imagined that all her old friends had abandoned her without a pang. For Lady Glanberris she could make some allowance—her feelings towards her daughter might have exercised undue influence over her better judgment; but for Sir Edward no such excuse was alleageable, and she felt the hatred that she had long since conceived for him virulently increase. She watched his every word and action, in the hope of discovering some means by which she might work out her revenge; and the cherishing of this gentle thought was the only solace she could find for the bitter mortification she endured.

The predestined victim of Leonora, however, seemed very little likely to afford her talents

for mischief scope for their development. His mode of life was such as to defy censure; and the general homage that he so gracefully received, wounded her to the quick. In spite of her malevolent vigilance, she could not even detect him in a passing flirtation whereon to hang a tale or devise a scheme, his attentions being too generally diffused to render possible the attempt so to do. She was beginning to despair of success; and, in the irritation of her feelings, she again thought of avoiding further humiliation by a rapid retreat from the scene of her triumph. Just, however, at this critical moment, chance seemed to throw in her way the very opportunity for which she had so long pined.

She had gone one evening to the Italiens, (where of course she had an excellent box,) at an unreasonably early hour—as early, in fact, as it was almost possible to go, for the overture had not begun. A new singer, whom report lauded to the skies, was to make her appearance that night in a new opera, which was to

be produced for the occasion; and Leonora, who was really a good judge of music, was anxious to be among the first to give her opinion upon the merits of the forthcoming performance. There were very few people in the house when she arrived—not more than three or four boxes being occupied; and, in order to pass away the time until the music should begin, she took up her glass to examine the scattered individuals who were seated at the other side of the house. To her excessive surprise, the very first face upon which her eye rested was that of Sir Edward Devereux.

He was sitting in the box exactly opposite to her own, and by his side was a lady, whom Leonora was not long in discovering to be one of the most beautiful women she had ever beheld: even at that distance her fine oval face, and splendid dark eyes and hair, were exceedingly striking. She seemed to be very tall, and still quite young, though her figure was on too large a scale to be sylph-like. She

was dressed in black, and wore no ornament except some large pearls, and a gem that sparkled upon her forehead. Leonora carefully noted every minute detail she could observe; but could not remember ever having seen her before. Her style of beauty and of dress were certainly not Parisian; she must, therefore, have come from some other land.

It was not, however, the birth-place or parentage of the lovely stranger that so much occupied Leonora—it was the extraordinary friendship or intimacy which apparently existed between her and her companion. The head of the lady was never, for one single instant, turned towards the house; and Sir Edward, who sat at the same side of the box with her, kept his eyes so firmly riveted upon her face, that he appeared insensible to any thing that might be passing around him. Even when the music began, their pre-occupation did not cease: they seemed scarcely to listen or to look at what was passing upon the stage, so absorbing

was their own conversation ; and it was not till the first act of the opera was over, that their apparently interesting communications to each other were interrupted by the entrance of a third person.

A very young man came into the box, and, after having shaken hands apparently very warmly with Sir Edward Devereux, he sat down in the vacant place opposite to the beautiful lady, and anxiously began to examine all around him by the help of his opera glass. Leonora immediately settled in her own mind that he was either the husband or the brother of the stranger, and inclined to the latter surmise as being properly the most correct, as he evidently looked younger than his fair companion. He was about the middle size, his features sharp and small, his hair and complexion extremely dark, and every movement marked by a restless vivacity, that gave the impression of his being a most intolerably fidgety person.

Although Leonora had fully persuaded her-

self that the two individuals before her were brother and sister, the contrast of the calm, Minerva-like stateliness of the lady, with the apparently mercurial temperament of the gentleman, could not but strike her, and she was lost in conjecture of who and what the strangers might be. Unfortunately, her curiosity was not likely to be soon gratified; for all the persons who had paid her their visits in her box that evening, were as ill informed as herself, although the beauty of the fair stranger had not failed to excite the most vivid admiration. Every glass was turned upon her box; but no decision was the result of such scrutiny, except the one constant asseveration, "that she was certainly not a Frenchwoman." This was not very enlightening; but, as nothing more could be learned, Leonora was forced to remain quietly enjoying her ignorance until the arrival of her husband; who, having previously made a dinner engagement with some of his sporting friends, could not be at the opera until late: it

was, in fact, almost over before he made his appearance. He was immediately assailed with questions as to his brother's friends by every body in the box; and the Duchesse de Monti, a gossiping little widow, who had accompanied Leonora to the opera, actually insisted upon his going round to the other side of the house, and inquiring from the attendants who were the persons occupying the same box as Sir Edward Devereux.

"It can be no harm!" exclaimed the lively lady, "as you are Sir Edward's brother. Even if he finds it out he cannot shoot you for your indiscretion."

"There will be no occasion for me to go," replied Mr. Devereux, looking rather annoyed at this allusion to the supposed propensity of his brother, and laying down his opera-glass; for I know all about the lady and her husband already!"

"Then he is her husband!" observed Leonora eagerly.

"Yes—they are the Prince and Princess Botzaris!"

"Oh! so she is a princess!" exclaimed the Duchesse de Monti, in a discontented tone; "and from what part of the world do they come?"

"From Greece. It seems they are very great people there, and old friends of Edward's: he spent a whole summer with them at their château."

"Oh! then, of course, he is in love with the princess," observed the duchesse calmly.

"I am sure I do not know any thing about it!" was the reply of Mr. Devereux.

"She is very handsome," said Leonora, resuming her scrutiny, and so delighted at the opening the discovery seemed to afford her, that she forgot to ask how her husband had so early become possessed of all this information.

"Very, indeed—but not my style of beauty!" he answered, with an admiring glance at his wife.

"Nor mine—she looks too fierce! I should

be afraid of her," rejoined the duchesse, with an affectation of a shudder she meant to be very pretty; and, as no one replied, she continued—"She certainly looks as if she could annihilate that little prince in a moment. I wonder if she is fond of him! Is he of an old family, Mr. Devereux? There are so many princes now."

"Oh! he is a real one, I can assure you. There is no much older family than his," replied Mr. Devereux, laughing.

"Well, at all events," continued the duchesse, who did not particularly like hearing other people admired or praised, "Sir Edward does not seem much afraid of the beautiful Greek: he is actually playing with her fan—and now, look! she is showing him her bracelet. What can they be talking about?" and she leaned both of the prettiest little white arms in the world upon the cushion in front of the box, in order the better to support her opera-glass with both hands, for she had been holding it up so long she was growing tired.

"I am sure I don't know!" repeated Mr. Devereux; "at all events, it cannot be about us, for they have never once looked at us."

"No! very luckily, or I could not have kept my glass up all night," replied the duchess, turning her sparkling eyes for a moment towards him; and then, resuming her occupation of watching her opposite neighbours, she continued, "The fact is, I am dying of curiosity: a new face always excites mine to the last degree."

"I should have thought that would have been more the case with one of our sex than with one of yours," observed the Count de Villeneuve, an extremely well-dressed young gentleman who was sitting next to Leonora.

"Not at all, count! It can be but of very little consequence to you, and it is our especial business," replied the duchess, without honouring him with a look.

"I don't see that at all," persisted the count,

who hated the duchess for her little slighting airs.

"I will tell you, then, for I am very frank, and not at all jealous," was the answer of the lady, without changing her manner; "but perhaps you do not know that there are people in society who are jealous."

"They must be women, then; for I am sure men are not!" answered the count, hoping he had said something sharp.

"Of course, it is only women I am talking about!" said the duchess, with a little gesture of contempt. "Well, then, you must know that, to women in general, a new face is a new danger, and not to be overlooked."

"I should think one face could not so much signify. There is plenty of room in the world for every one, and there are plenty of people."

"Count de Villeneuve!" said the duchess, turning round with a very serious air, "I am surprised at you. You a sportsman, and not on your guard against poachers! I appeal

to Mr. Devereux to know whether that is right."

"Oh, certainly not! people should be always on the look-out," replied the gentleman addressed. "Strangers are very dangerous," he added, with a cunning look.

"There!—I told you so!" said the duchess with a triumphant air; and, turning her little fat white shoulders to the young count—to whom, as he had only just left college, she did not think it the least worth while talking—she resumed her former occupation.

"You are very pensive to-night, Mrs. Devereux," he ventured to observe; for Leonora, entirely occupied with her own thoughts, did not appear to have heard a word of all that had been said.

"Me—I!" she replied with a start. "Oh, no! I was only listening, or trying to listen, to the music. How divinely that new woman sings! The finale is just going to begin."

"There is Sir Edward going away, I declare!"

exclaimed the ever-watchful duchess. "Now, he is shaking hands with the prince; and look how the fair Greek draws herself up and speaks to him! Good heavens—how stately! And what an air! Just like an empress dismissing her train. I see the grand style is decidedly hers; indeed, it must be so from her size. I shall take care not to venture my poor little insignificance near her; the very idea of it crushes me. I wonder what sort of bonnet she wears, and where she will get her gowns made. Ah! there is the finale beginning at last. How refreshing! I am quite tired of listening to the music. I always am before the opera is over;" and the duchess, having fairly talked herself out of breath, quietly leaned back in her chair.

The finale was too beautiful, and too well sung, for even the pre-occupied Leonora to lose a note of it; and, as the whole audience appeared to be of the same opinion, none left their places until the concluding chords warned them that it was time to depart. In the hurry of

putting on her cloak and trying to get before the crowd, Leonora forgot to take a last look at the persons whom she had been, during the whole evening, watching with so much anxiety; but she had no sooner entered the passage leading from her box, than she met the Prince and Princess Botzaris face to face. Mr. Devereux, who, with the little duchess leaning on his arm, was just before her, stopped, to her great surprise, to speak to the prince, with whom she did not know that he was acquainted.

An immediate introduction among all the ladies was the consequence; and the duchess forgot her own insignificance for the moment, in the delight of having been one of the first to make acquaintance with the beautiful stranger. A long half hour of shivering in a corner until their carriages could come up in their turn, gave ample time for a sufficient interchange of the small civilities for which foreigners just arrived are always peculiarly grateful; and when at last the new friends

parted for the night, it was with mutual pleasure that they reiterated the promise of meeting early the next day.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM that day the friendship between Leonora and the Princess Botzaris rapidly increased, and nothing was wanting on the part of the former to rivet it still more strongly every hour. She was indefatigable in her attentions, and a very short time served to establish an extraordinary intimacy. The rapidity with which these inflammable daughters of the south seemed to glide into each other's confidence and affections, would have been scarcely credible to those born and nurtured in a colder clime; and yet their dispositions were not exactly alike. The nature of Leonora was the calmer of the two—making up in cunning for what it might lack in fire; but that of the beautiful Bianca—for so the princess was called—was

of that impetuous and overwhelming kind, that, like one of the burning lava streams of her own sunny land, it bore down and swept over all before it. The princess was an Italian by birth, and had married the Prince Theodore Botzaris—she said from love—but in reality because he was completely subservient to her will, and was besides heir to an immense fortune; he being the only child of an extremely rich man. She certainly did not dislike him, or she never would have endured certain peculiarities in his manner and conversation, that not only sometimes provoked the ridicule of the world, but were constantly vexatious to herself. One of these annoying defects was his extreme jealousy, and the exaggerated expression he did not hesitate publicly to give to his sentiments upon this point.

“If any one was to dare to look at my wife, or to write to her, or speak to her without my leave, I would kill him on the spot!”

This was one of his many wise sayings of

the kind which, after all, were not far different from the tenor of his thoughts; for there was something viciously restless in the sparkle of his small black eye. The stately Bianca, however, took it all in good part, and merely patted the raven hair of her irritable little husband whenever he was in one of his worst moods, in the same manner she would have done to stop the barking of her favourite dog. With her large, steady, stag-like gaze, she would look down upon the perturbed features of her fretful liege lord with a grand calmness, as though it were not worth while rousing the terrible powers, she knew lay within her own heart. It seemed as if it was only on great occasions she could condescend to be angry; while the lively Theodore thought it no degradation to be in a passion twenty times a-day. Perhaps this great calmness of the princess might partly arise from her having no secrets to conceal from her husband; but it was certain that no two people, who were so completely different

in every way, ever agreed better. The peculiar sensitiveness on the part of the prince, wherever his wife was concerned, had not escaped the observation of Leonora; to whom, however, the sentiments of the princess, with regard to her husband, were as a sealed book. In spite of the numerous wiles and crafty devices, by which Leonora hoped to throw her off her guard, or sought to wring from her her most secret thoughts, the cool determination of the princess baffled all such attempts: she was neither to be cajoled nor surprised into any confidence, unless that which she chose to bestow. She never spoke of her husband, or mentioned the date of her marriage—the circumstances that led to her marrying a foreigner, or any thing relating to her own family or former life; and therefore, without the greatest rudeness, Leonora could not openly continue the inquiries she had at first so unscrupulously attempted to make.

Another point upon which the fair Bianca

was equally reserved, was her friendship with Sir Edward Devereux. Where it had begun, or how long since the acquaintance between them had existed, were secrets which all the ingenuity of Leonora failed to discover; and the more communicative Theodore, having probably received his lesson from his wife, proved to be equally discreet. All this—as Leonora imagined—involved some mystery which she spared no pains to unravel; but the impression upon her mind, which had been created the very first time she had seen the Princess and Sir Edward together at the opera, grew stronger every day. She was firmly persuaded that they were deeply attached to each other; and, as she had constant opportunities of so doing, she watched with intense anxiety the development of this imaginary passion. She felt certain that she could not be mistaken; for surely no feeling less powerful than that of love, could awaken such visible emotion as these two persons always experienced on meeting. She had repeatedly

observed this symptom, and as repeatedly assured herself that her suspicions were just.

The conduct of the prince was the only circumstance that disturbed her calculations. He could not be ignorant of the daily visits of Sir Edward to his wife; for she had more than once found them all three together at the Hotel du Rhin, where the prince and princess were staying; and he also must have seen that he was her constant attendant in public—and yet, strange to say, his jealousy never showed itself. In this one single instance its wild ravings appeared to have been laid to sleep by a spell. He seemed literally to adore Sir Edward Devereux; and Leonora knew that it was arranged that, on leaving Paris, he and the princess, after a short visit to London, were to spend the summer at Atherston Castle. Atherston—from which she was excluded! Atherston—that she had once looked upon almost as her own! Atherston—the splendour of which she had expected through her hus-

band to enjoy, even after the disgrace of her elopement! And another was to reign there in her place! The beautiful Bianca was to shine there in all her glory—to be worshipped and admired; and, above all, to be cherished and loved by the man beneath whose withering scorn she herself now writhed!

Frantic with jealousy and rage, Leonora vowed that this should never be the case; and, in the wildness of her anger, determined to redouble her vigilance, and allow no scruples to stand in the way of her revenge. Revenge upon the man she hated, must be purchased at any price! The humiliation she had so long endured at the hands of Sir Edward must be atoned for, were it with tears of blood; and fiend-like thoughts took possession of her mind, as she dwelt upon the possibility of removing him altogether from her path. All the virulence of her subtle Italian nature awoke with redoubled strength, as she gloated, not only on the prospect of avenging the many insults

she had received, but of annihilating their author.

The power of so doing seemed actually thrown into her hands. What more easy task than to profit by the curious coincidence of her own secret desires with the actual circumstances in which she and her destined victim were placed! To arouse the jealousy of the Prince Botzaris, and fix his attention upon the conduct of Sir Edward and his wife, would be too certain a means of exciting a quarrel between them, for her to doubt for a moment of her success. It was evident to her, that ignorance alone caused the great tranquillity of the inflammable being whose mind appeared a chaos of suspicion and jealousy: a single spark, cautiously dropped, would immediately fire the train; and she trusted to her own skill for her safe escape from even the possibility of detection. This diabolical scheme, once admitted, gradually took possession of her mind, and the horrible thought grew and strengthened

until she had firmly taken up the opinion, "That it was a duty she owed to herself to avenge all the scorn and contumely with which she had been treated." Not once did she acknowledge how just had been this condemnation.

Hatred against the individual who had pronounced her doom, was the only guiding influence she consulted, and to follow its dictates blindly, was the only solace admitted by her distracted mind. Day after day, and hour after hour, she laboured to mature her plans; but hitherto fate had been extremely unpropitious. Not a single opportunity had occurred of which she could take advantage; and, to add to her disappointment, a slight indisposition having confined the princess to her room for some days, she had been less in her society than usual. At last all difficulties seemed to clear themselves away from her path—the beautiful Bianca rose resplendent from her bed of sickness, and the usual career of gaiety and

amusement was, with fresh ardour, resumed by the fair friends.

Nothing that disturbed the even tenor of their way occurred for some little time ; but one day, when Leonora had gone as usual to call for the princess at the Hotel du Rhin, she observed a very visible alteration both in her manner and appearance. A dejected and embarrassed air had taken the place of her usually imperious demeanour, and a restless look of anxiety, and even fear, shone in her brilliant eyes. There was an expression in the eyes of the Princess Botzaris that Leonora had never been able to meet. It was not a joyous expression : those large, almond-shaped, liquid-black eyes, might look loving, but not gay ; but so intense was the gaze that they could give, that Leonora always shrunk from it. Those eyes seemed to demand her very thoughts from her inmost soul, so earnest was their entreaty or command. It was, therefore, a very unusual expression which now animated

them, and threw an air of suffering and restlessness over the finely chiselled face of the princess. Before she had been a minute in the room, Leonora remarked the change. Something extraordinary must have occurred; but she took care not to make any remark upon the altered appearance of her friend, hoping that the mystery would develop itself, and so she said gaily—

“I am rather late, I am afraid, princess—am I not? My children were out with their nurses, and I always like to see them safe home before I leave it.”

“You are quite a slave to your maternal duties, my dear Mrs. Devereux,” replied the princess with a smile, but looking from the window near which she sat.

“Oh, not yet! but I intend to be one in time. I shall certainly never allow my daughters to have any other governess than myself: that I have determined upon already.”

"They will not want one ! You can teach them better than any one—you do every thing so well. How charmingly you sing and play!" said the princess, kindly.

"Music is my passion ! Every one must have some passion, you know, princess," replied Leonora, laughing.

"It is too true," answered the princess with a sigh ; and then she added quietly—"but I have not seen you dance yet. They tell me you dance quite as well as you sing."

"Well, you will have an opportunity of judging very soon. There is to be a ball at court next week, and I will exhibit this very rare accomplishment, if you wish it," said Leonora.

"I do, indeed ! I take a lively interest in every thing you do—an unaccountable interest, I should say, were it not that I feel you must fascinate every one you meet ! You have more grace, and much more delightful manners, than any one I ever saw before. I always imagined that Englishwomen were stiff and cold."

“Oh, not all of them—though some may be!” replied Leonora, blushing in spite of herself at the searching glance turned upon her; and then she added—“you are too flattering, my dear princess, to my poor merits.”

As she spoke, she rose from her chair, and, going to the window, pretended to look at the sky; but in reality she was only trying to find out what there was passing in the street that could so absorb the attention of the princess. She could not observe any thing, and, turning round hastily, she said—

“But we are losing a great deal of precious time—are we not? It is a very long business seeing the pictures in the Louvre, and the day is not so bright as usual.”

“Suppose we put it off, then, my dear Mrs. Devereux! I really do not feel able to go to the Louvre to day. I do not know what is the matter with me—I suppose I am not well. I think I shall not go out;” and, as she spoke, the princess opened a little work-box before

her, and, taking out a half-finished purse, began to prepare her work, as if she really meant to stay at home the whole morning.

“As you please, dear princess!” said Leonora, with an air of indifference; “but it is almost a pity to give up our plan. I should have liked so much to have gone with you, and I may not have another morning to myself for a long time.”

“I really feel so ill,” said the princess, languidly.

At that moment a servant entered with a note and a card, which he laid before the princess, and said—

“Sir Edward’s compliments, and he could not come now, but will call in the evening.”

“It is well!” she replied, and, hurriedly opening the note, she began to read. As the cloud on the mountain-top vanishes beneath the sunburst, so did the gloom disappear from the face of the lovely Bianca, ere she had well finished devouring the few lines contained in the note.

The eagerness with which her eye scanned the words before her, betrayed the anxiety from which apparently their meaning had relieved her; for with a well-pleased look she folded up the note, and putting it in her work-box, locked it up with her work, and put the little golden key into the drawer of the table near which she sat. Having thus disposed of it, she seemed suddenly to become aware of the presence of Leonora, who had been attentively watching her every movement, and, turning to her with a smile, she said—

“I am very uncivil, my dear Mrs. Devereux, to keep you waiting all this time—but you are so kind I know you will forgive me. I have had such a headache all the morning, I really could not make up my mind to undertake the Louvre. Looking up at pictures for any length of time is very tiring.”

“Still, I think going out would do you good, princess. You surely do not mean to stay in this hot room all day! It is the worst thing

possible for a headache," urged Leonora, anxiously.

"Well, I really think it is!" replied the suddenly recovered Bianca; "suppose, then, we keep our resolution, and go to the Louvre. You will think I am very capricious," and, as she spoke, her frank smile displayed the most splendid teeth, which were not often visible.

"Oh! you know caprice is one of our little feminine privileges," said Leonora, laughing; "but I am really anxious you should see the pictures to-day, if possible. We have so many engagements, we may not have another morning to spare."

"I will go, then, if you do not mind waiting five minutes," answered the princess, getting up to leave the room. Long before she returned, fully equipped in the most becoming manner, Leonora had possessed herself of the note. It contained these words:—"MY DEAR PRINCESS—Why torment yourself so uselessly? Need I repeat to you, that with me your secret—our

secret, I should say—is as safe as though it were confined to your own breast? Trust to me, therefore; and, believe me, the person to whom you allude is not dangerous: she has not the slightest suspicion about you. I shall be with you this evening. Theodore tells me he does not dine at home. Your sincere and devoted friend—E. DEVEREUX.”

“At last!” exclaimed Leonora rapturously, as she finished reading the note, and put it in the pocket of her gown—“At last my enemy is in my power, and the sweets of vengeance shall be mine!” and, with wild visions of success and revenge thrilling through her brain, she, with her usual bland smile and honied words, passed nearly the whole of that day by the side of her unsuspecting friend; whose life, as she thought, she was about to render still more intolerable than her own. A scruple of conscience was a feeling unknown to her, and, urged on by a frantic determination to succeed, she followed no other guide. Neither pity nor

remorse could find a resting-place within that wicked, designing heart; her fate, she felt, was now in her own hand, and not a moment must be lost.

The next day the letter of Sir Edward was safely conveyed to the hands of the Prince Botzaris; and Leonora, with a beautifully serene countenance but a beating heart, anxiously awaited the result of her iniquitous deed.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAY after day, however, passed on, and the intelligence she expected had not yet gladdened the ear of Leonora. The princess went out as usual; and, with or without her husband, was generally accompanied by Sir Edward Devereux, who seemed to take especial delight in making her acquainted with the many places and objects of interest in the French metropolis. The intimacy, which the envenomed heart of Leonora had instantly denounced as criminal, appeared neither to increase nor to diminish, and was certainly not less cordial than before on the part of the Prince Botzaris.

Such an unlooked-for state of quietude was an enigma to Leonora; but vain were her conjectures or endeavours to discover the truth, and

she was compelled daily to endure the company of the very persons whom she had endeavoured to injure, and still to keep up the farce of affectionate friendship with them. Not the slightest difference was apparent in the manner of either the prince or princess towards her. Her equal in adroit dissimulation, they kept their own counsel, and, except to Sir Edward Devereux, confided to no one the affair. It was not difficult for Sir Edward to have given the key to the mystery; but, with his usual generosity, he forbore to strike a blow, and allowed even his most inveterate enemy the chances of silence and oblivion. If, however, the outward bearing of her foreign friends, was unchanged towards Leonora, their secret sentiments had undergone a very material alteration. Each more or less suspected the treachery she had practised towards them; but, as the evidence against her was merely presumptive, they were unwilling to make a vain accusation, which could lead to no beneficial result.

The womanly tact, however, of the princess, enabled her to see far deeper into the almost fathomless heart of Leonora than her impetuous husband could have done. She watched, and calculated, and studied every sentiment and every expression of her now suspected friend, until she had possessed herself of many traits which had till then escaped her; and as the conviction stole upon her, that Leonora was far from being as guileless as she appeared, the fierceness of her own violent passions suddenly awoke. It was with difficulty that she restrained the expression of them; but she had far too much regard for her dignity ever to wage a war of words. Once convinced, she would act, and her first step towards vengeance would be decisive and complete. Little did Leonora imagine, as she gazed upon the calm queen-like beauty of her friend, which was the theme of every tongue, that those statuesque features could ever distort themselves by fury, or those tender eyes look down upon her with

loathing and with scorn. The storm was, however, gathering at a distance, which was soon to overwhelm her—the retribution of her sins was nearer at hand than she supposed.

The day appointed for the ball at court had at length arrived. As it was the only very large assemblage of persons which the Prince and Princess Botzaris were likely to mix in during their stay at Paris, they had long looked forward to it with feelings both of curiosity and pleasure. They had gone a good deal into society already, but it was chiefly in a small circle; and, being very much addicted to sight-seeing, the splendour of the palace and the beauty of the dresses of the ladies, promised to be a source of great interest to them. They were not disappointed, and, having arrived very early, they had full time to satisfy even their insatiate curiosity. After the first hour, however, they became a little more calm, and began to look around for their acquaintances and friends.

Leonora had not yet arrived. She was to come alone; for Mr. Devereux had announced his intention of going out of town with one of his racing friends that evening, and he was not to return until the following day. After the prince and princess had remained standing for some time in the corner where they had first established themselves, they saw her enter at the other side of the room. Her appearance was actually greeted by a murmur of admiration from all those who were nearest to her. She was dressed in white, and covered with jewels. So dazzling an apparition had probably not often greeted the eye of many of the spectators; for they actually crowded round her, and for some little time she could not advance much beyond the door through which she had entered. Leonora was not near enough for the princess to be able to note the details of her dress; but she saw the effect produced, and, with a truly feminine vanity, could not help casting one glance upon the mirror

by her side. Its reflection might have satisfied the most fastidious; for, never had the beautiful Bianca looked more splendid than she did that evening, in her pale yellow dress and matchless pearls; and, though her beauty was of so totally different a style from that of Leonora, it was not less perfect in its kind.

After a considerable time spent in struggling with the crowd, Leonora at last joined her friends. The usual remarks having been interchanged, the customary compliments between the ladies, on the respective beauty of their dresses, began to follow, when all at once, as Leonora turned for a moment to answer some question which had been asked by a person behind her, the Prince Botzaris found his arm suddenly grasped by his wife; but with so extraordinary a violence, that it seemed actually as if held in a vice. He looked up in amazement, and beheld her absolutely gasping for breath.

“Bianca, what is the matter? You are

suffering—you are ill !” he hastily exclaimed in a voice of alarm.

“No—no ! do not take any notice; but give your arm to her, and then follow me,” she replied, as soon as she could sufficiently command herself, and pointing to Leonora as she spoke.

It was some time before they could extricate themselves from the crowd; but at length the adjoining room was gained, and the princess walking up to the far end, sat down upon a sofa, and made room for Leonora by her side.

“The heat in the other room was really dreadful,” she said to her husband, who, standing before her, was gazing anxiously upon her face, which was pale as marble.

“You must rest a little here, princess—you have tired yourself coming here so early,” suggested Leonora, now for the first time observing the apparent illness of her companion.

“I shall be better in a moment—it is only the heat,” was the reply of the princess, as her

eyes quickly wandered over the splendid ornaments of her friend ; and then she added carelessly, "What a beautiful bracelet—your jewels are magnificent ! I never saw you wear them before."

"No—they only appear on great occasions ; but I beg you to believe not from the same reason as those of our fat friend, the Marquise de L'Esterre."

"No—and what is her reason ?" asked the prince, looking curious.

"It is not her reason at all ; but she is only allowed to wear her diamonds twice a-year," replied Leonora, smiling.

"Allowed ! and who should prevent her ?" he inquired.

"Only her husband's creditors—or her own—I do not know which ; but all her diamonds have long been in pawn—that every one knows !" was the reply, as Leonora bent down her head to clasp the bracelet she had taken off to show to the princess.

The latter took advantage of the movement to catch the eye of her husband, and hastily put her finger to her lip. The obedient Theodore knew that was a signal for him not to talk any more ; so he amused himself by pulling down his waistcoat, and pulling up his gloves, until the position of these component parts of his toilet could by no ingenuity be improved.

While he was thus occupied, the two ladies continued their conversation upon the jewels of Leonora. It was a theme of which she was never weary ; and, as she soon saw that both the prince and princess were extremely good judges of their intrinsic merits, she gladly enlarged upon the value of her treasures.

“The stones are magnificent, certainly,” observed the princess admiringly ; “but the setting is not English—is it ?”

“Oh, no ! The stones were all set abroad. Our English setting is quite different—more solid, perhaps—but not prettier.”

“Much heavier ; but I like our designs

better—particularly those that are taken from the antique. But how comes it, Mrs. Devereux, that all your family jewels—jewels that I suppose belonged to the ancestors of Sir Edward—should have been set in Italy? for the setting of all these stones is decidedly Italian—and Italian of the very best style.”

“My jewels have nothing at all to say to Sir Edward or his family: they are my own, and were left to me by a friend of my father’s—an old lady, who died not very long ago,” said Leonora proudly; and she forthwith recounted the story of Madame Satriani, which she had not before inflicted upon the princess. The latter, with her large full eye watching the beautiful rich red lips of Leonora smilingly repeating the oft-told tale, did not lose a syllable of the narrative, and, when it was concluded, cordially added her congratulations upon her having possessed so generous a friend, and then she carelessly added—

“Your necklace, and also your tiara, are

certainly matchless, but they are only of diamonds! Do you know, if I was to choose out of all you have got on, it would not be an ornament all diamonds? I had much rather have that large ruby brooch with the great pearls—it is so much more uncommon.”

“That was my poor father’s favourite jewel,” observed Leonora; “he said just the same—that it was so uncommon.”

“So it is! Not only is the size of the ruby very rare, but the carving upon it is exquisite—and could only have been done by a first-rate artist. It is the head of the Madonna, I think,” said the princess leaning towards the brooch to examine it.

“Yes—the head and hands are perfect specimens of carving; the right holds a cross,” said Leonora, turning more towards the light.

“And the left is leaning on a globe,” continued the princess, who could not possibly, from where she was sitting, see the details she described.

“Exactly!” replied Leonora, unfastening the brooch; “but you would like to see it nearer, perhaps? There, by that lamp the light is very good, and she gave the jewel into the hand of the princess, who took off her glove to receive it. It had, however, no sooner touched the beautiful taper fingers upon which Leonora laid it, than so extraordinary a change came over the manner and look of the princess, that even her husband gazed upon her with astonishment and alarm. She lifted the jewel reverently to her lips, and kissed it meekly and devoutly, as though it had been some saintly relic; and then, raising her other hand towards heaven, and utterly regardless of the scene passing around her, she murmured a Latin prayer. It was one of those appointed for the dead; and Leonora, well versed in all the rites of the Roman Catholic church, shuddered as she caught some of the words. Without, however, giving her time to speak, the princess hastily but solemnly exclaimed—

"Now, if I am wrong, may God forgive me, as I forgive all those who have unjustly accused me!" and then, looking from her husband to Leonora, she added—

"If this jewel be the one that I mean, a picture is contained within it!"

As she spoke, she took a pin from her dress, and, pressing the point of it firmly against one of the stones, the large ruby in the centre flew up, and disclosed a miniature beneath.

For an instant she looked intently upon it, and then held it before Leonora, who no sooner beheld the face it represented, than, quite forgetting where she was, she gave a faint cry, and sunk back upon the sofa. It was the portrait of Filippo Colonna! Fortunately there was no one near enough to observe the terrible agitation of all the three actors in this scene; for the princess, having showed the miniature to her husband, he at once named the original of it, and uttered a vehement exclamation of surprise. Leonora, though still far from sus-

pecting the real truth of the case, was thunder-struck at the discovery, and scarcely knew what countenance to assume. A few moments, however, gave her time to collect her scattered senses, and remembering that it was very possible that the features of a man, who had been so well known as the Marchese Colonna, should be recognised, resolved not to criminate herself.

“How very singular,” she said, “that I should not have known the treasure I possessed!

miniature is beautiful—quite beautiful; the picture, I suppose, of some relation of Madame Satriani: I conclude she forgot to mention it. Perhaps it was that of her husband!” With marvellous self-command Leonora spoke these words; but the death-like pallor of her cheek belied the calmness she assumed, and her blanched and parted lips, and contracted brow, showed the agony she endured, as the princess with solemn gravity replied—

“No—Mrs. Devereux! the picture you

hold in your hand is that of the Marchese Colonna."

"Indeed! Are you quite sure, princess?" she rejoined, and affecting to examine the painting.

"As sure as a wife can be of the features of her husband!"

"Wife—husband!" echoed Leonora, with a bewildered look.

"Yes—Mrs. Devereux! I will no longer conceal it from you, though hitherto a foolish fancy has made me wish to prevent its being known. The Marchese Colonna was my first husband!"

"Yours!" exclaimed Leonora, in a tone of horror.

"Mine!" replied the princess, "and, pardon me if I say so, but from him alone could you have received these jewels, which he had not a right to bestow; for at our marriage they were settled exclusively upon me."

She rose as she spoke, and appeared as if

about to depart; but Leonora, terrified by the imminence of her peril, laid her hand upon the arm of the princess, and gasped forth—

“I do not know what you mean—you are under some extraordinary mistake!” but the princess interrupted her sternly, as she shook off her touch with an air of supreme contempt—

“No—Mrs. Devereux! I see it all—though somewhat late. You are the woman who robbed me of the affections of my husband—though until now I never knew that you were the same ‘Leonora,’ whose letters are in my possession. Carlo Vandelli was discreet. Farewell! the Prince Botzaris will call upon you to-morrow;” and, disdaining even a word of anger or reproach, the haughty Bianca, with flashing eyes, took the arm of her husband, and with a lofty air left the room, without deigning to take the slightest notice of the entreaty for pity and silence which the terrified Leonora stammered forth.

It was too late—and, as she watched the stately form of the woman whom she had so deeply injured disappear in the crowd, she wrung her hands in an agony of despair. She knew that her doom was sealed!

CHAPTER XV.

No one who has not seen an Italian in a passion, can picture to themselves the extraordinary state of wild fury into which these excitable people allow their feelings to hurry them. The Princess Botzaris, although so full of grace and dignity, was not exempt from the failing common to those born under the same sunny skies, and did not hesitate to give way, when irritated, to fits of the most ungovernable anger. If restrained by her superiority of station and education from the more demonstrative modes of expressing her indignation, the deadly nature of her wrath was not less terrible to contemplate: it was the muttering of the coming storm—the trembling of the *avalanche*, ere its fearful course should

prostrate all before it. Even the fiercely irritable temper of the prince, her husband, quailed before her implacable determination; and his more flexible nature was perhaps the real secret of the perfect harmony that had always existed between them. He found it so much more agreeable to submit than to combat, that, once having comprehended the disposition of his wife, he quietly yielded the first place to the stronger spirit of the two. His fury, upon discovering the conduct of Leonora towards her, knew no bounds; for, besides the dark history of former days, no doubt now existed in his mind, that she was also the author of the base device of sending to him the letter of Sir Edward Devereux.

The indignation with which he regarded such horrible treachery, was scarcely equalled by the unbounded contempt it inspired towards its author; and it required very little reflection, either on his part or that of the princess, to decide that any further friendly communication

with a person like Leonora was totally beneath their dignity. To demand back the jewels, and consign the unhappy woman who had purchased them at so terrible a price to oblivion and disgrace, was the course they intended to pursue.

All the circumstances attendant upon the first marriage and separation of the princess, were perfectly known to her husband; and as, fortunately, his jealousy did not extend to the past, he made common cause with his wife in resenting the many injuries that had been heaped upon her. That the indefatigable efforts of the Marchese Colonna to procure a divorce had been instigated by his passion for another, was no secret from the princess, who had baffled all these efforts by her superior influence and address; but the name of her rival had never been known to her, until the discovery of the letters which had been brought by Carlo Vandelli gave her a little more insight into the matter. She was still, however, very nearly in the dark as to the writer; as the letters

were without dates, and bore no other signature than that of "Leonora,"—a name too common in Italy to be any positive guide; and further information she could not obtain.

Carlo Vandelli had his own notions as to fidelity and honour, and was neither to be bribed nor threatened into any more full disclosures than he chose to make: he just told enough of his master's secrets to obtain the sum he had demanded at first, and scorned farther treachery as an insult to the dead. All, therefore, that the Princess Botzaris had been able to ascertain from him was, that "Leonora" was the name of the woman who had supplanted her in the affections of her former husband, to whom she had always intended to return; and that, when dying, he had ordered a packet of letters and a box to be delivered to a person who would convey them safely to her. Who that person had been, the man positively refused to state; but he confessed to having kept back the letters; and the princess, imagin-

ing that they might some day be useful to her in recovering her jewels, which she doubted not were contained in the box, had unhesitatingly purchased them from him. Far, very far was she from supposing that, in her own bright path through life, she should meet the very person for whom she sought—one also who could not plead the temptation of want as an excuse for the sin she had committed.

As the first impression of the hideous fact dawned upon her, a sickening sensation of horror seemed to paralyze her as she stood. She could not look upon a woman at whose hands she had sustained so foul a wrong, without a shudder that froze the blood in her veins. No sooner had she recognized her jewels than every thing was explained, and it needed but the evidence she had so easily obtained to convict her enemy of her crime. In the well-concocted tale to which she had so calmly listened, she saw but still further proofs of the deep dissimulation of the artful being

who had hitherto eluded the fate she so thoroughly deserved; and her own nature, which, though violent, was essentially honourable and true, revolted from further contact with one whom she so heartily despised.

It was not difficult for the Princess Botzaris, actuated as she was by determination, and a conviction of her own rights, to follow the course upon which she had decided. Once more she must hold communication with Leonora—once more, and for the last time. The demand she was about to make was based upon a just right, and she would not hesitate to make it. Her first intention had been to have sent the prince to negotiate the affair; but, fearing his want of decision, she resolved to treat it merely as a matter of business. Instead, therefore, of the dreaded interview she expected, Leonora, as the next morning she sat trembling alone, was somewhat relieved by the arrival only of a letter. It was from the Prince Botzaris, and, though couched in studiously

formal terms, was dictatorial and imperious to the most galling degree. Leonora ground her teeth with rage as she read. The instant restoration of the whole of the jewels was demanded of her, or an immediate appeal to her husband threatened. Her own letters were generously offered as an equivalent of the loss she was about to sustain; and the one from the prince concluded with the hope, "that the discovery of the secret which united the Prince and Princess Botzaris in such close friendship with Sir Edward Devereux, was as satisfactory to Mrs. Devereux as that of her identity with the 'Leonora' of the letters was to them."

The insult was cutting, but the terror with which she was overwhelmed deadened every other feeling. The instantaneous decision demanded of her could only avert an equally instantaneous ruin. If she hesitated to obey, the full detail of her crime would be laid before her unsuspecting husband—she had therefore no alternative. The faint hope that, by subter-

fuge and procrastination, she might have gained time to have appropriated to herself even part of her ill-gotten treasure, fled before the menacing tone of the letter that lay open before her. For the first time she found herself powerless and at fault. A master spirit held over her its potent spell; she must bow before it, or fall beneath its blow. As she sat gazing upon the fatal words, all courage forsook her, she trembled from head to foot—her beautiful eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and her face was as pale as death: she appeared as she really felt, distracted with terror and shame, and every instant she started and looked anxiously round. Each moment as it passed increased the danger, for she expected her husband's return—it was past the hour that he had named for it, and yet she sat there trembling and shrinking still. She took up the letter, and again read it through to the end. It did not give a shadow of hope. As her eye caught the cutting words in which her

conduct was so unhesitatingly condemned, she summoned all her pride to her aid; but, alas! its support was feeble, and her wonted spirit gave way. She could not think—she could not act—her senses seemed absolutely leaving her: she leaned her head upon her hands as if to compel to stillness the throbbings of her brain. It was pitiable to behold the state to which she was reduced—cowering and shivering before the consequences of her crime.

As she sat thus alone in this terrible hour of suffering and of fear, the minutes glided on with a swiftness of which she was not aware, and a considerable time had already elapsed since she had received the letter of the prince. All at once she was startled by the opening of the door, and a servant entering the room announced to her, “that the secretary of the Prince Botzaris was in the ante-room, and could not wait any longer.”

“What does he want?” asked Leonora hoarsely.

"He will not tell me—except that he is to receive one packet and deliver another to you, madam," was the reply.

"Tell him to come in," said Leonora almost in a whisper, and in another moment there entered a well-dressed, gentlemanlike, looking man, with a grave expression of countenance. Leonora gave but one glance towards him, and saw that he held in his hand a packet. She walked slowly into the next room, and returned carrying the jewel-box, which she laid upon the table, and made a sign to the man to take it.

"Perhaps you will have the kindness to seal up the key," said he, hesitatingly; "the jewels are of great value."

Leonora did as she was requested, and received a formal receipt and the packet containing her own letters in return. And then the secretary, who evidently knew the whole importance of his mission, took up the box, and, making a low bow, quitted the room.

The humiliation of Leonora had begun; but

she scarcely had power to understand the awful situation in which she stood. All had passed so rapidly that a sense of bewilderment took possession of her—she felt as if suffering from a hideous dream. The realities of life, however, do not long permit such delusions; and Leonora was soon awakened from hers, by the simple fact of the recurrence of the domestic sights and sounds that will not pause in a household, although one of its members may be full of woe.

She heard the voices of her children on the stairs—they were coming in from their morning drive, and were always brought straight to the drawing-room on their return. The sight of their smiling faces, as each nurse proudly entered with her respective charge, was more than the overtasked brain of their unhappy mother could endure; and, as she pressed her beautiful infants to her heart, she burst into so violent a paroxysm of tears, that the servants looked on in wonder and dismay. For the first time she felt the position in which

those two unoffending children might stand, were their mother's shame once made public to the world. And how was it possible that it should not be so proclaimed? The bitterness of this thought reanimated her sinking courage: for the sake of her children she must endeavour to be calm. She must endeavour to reflect and to act, if she meant, even for a time, to avert the blow that must ultimately fall upon them.

As her thoughts went no further than the worldly punishment that might follow upon her sin; so her first care must be to conceal, if possible, all traces of what had just occurred. An instant flight from Paris seemed the most practicable of all the many plans her fertile imagination speedily suggested. Once removed from the scene of her disaster, some plausible tale might be devised which would enable her to gain time. To remain where she was, was impossible. The habits of intimacy in which she had latterly lived with those who were now her most implacable foes, could not be broken through

without attracting the attention of others as well as that of her husband; and to conceal the fact of some misunderstanding having arisen between them from his knowledge—even for a day—was a hope that she felt to be utterly vain. Could she even succeed in giving her own colouring to the tale she must relate, who could assure her that the prince and princess would not fearlessly divulge the truth? It was now their only mode of revenge, and she knew too much of Italian nature, not to feel certain that that was a delight it would be difficult to tempt them to forego. To remain, therefore, within their reach, would be courting the danger she must shun; and she instantly resolved to leave Paris without delay, and accompany her husband to England. He intended, she knew, returning thither in a few days, and she determined to hasten his departure, and, until the hour of it arrived, she would remain within the shelter of her own home.

This arrangement certainly promised more

chance of escape than any other she could think of; and endeavouring to calm her agitation, in order to be able to commence the necessary preparations for her journey, she anxiously awaited the coming of Mr. Devereux, in order to break to him the determination she had formed, and which she knew would excite his surprise. In two days he was to return to England for the last week of the hunting season; and until that time she intended so fully to occupy his time, that he would have no leisure to pay any visits, and therefore would be less likely to receive the information which, she did not doubt, would be speedily conveyed to his ears.

In what manner she should parry the blow, when eventually it should fall upon her, she had not yet decided; but to gain time must be her first object. Time, however, seemed more at her command than just then she could have wished; for the whole day passed, and the next followed, and yet Mr.

Devereux had not returned. This unlooked-for mischance redoubled her anxiety and alarm; but, at length, she was relieved from the suspense which her self-incarceration had increased, and once more the friendly voice of her husband greeted her anxious ear.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was evening when Mr. Devereux made his appearance; and Leonora, in her dismal solitude, was sitting in her dressing-room, restless and unoccupied, suffering acutely both in body and mind. She had not slept for two nights, and was unable to eat, so parched with fever had she become. She looked wild and haggard; and, as she sat wrapped up in her long loose robe of black silk, with her hair carelessly pushed back from her forehead, her appearance was so altered that it must have attracted the attention of any person not completely pre-occupied with their own thoughts.

This was probably the case with Stuart Devereux at that moment; for, as he entered the room of his wife, he made no sort of observation

either upon her looks or the unusual circumstance of her sitting there alone and undressed at that hour. He, too, looked harassed and disturbed; but as he hastened to account for his protracted absence by reasons purely connected with the sport in which he had been engaged, Leonora attached no consequence to the flushed and excited state in which he evidently had returned. To have made an excursion farther into the country than he had at first intended, in order to see some young racehorses he wished to buy, was not an event extraordinary enough to rivet her attention, and she readily accepted it as an excuse for his not having sooner returned; and listened, with apparent complacency, to a whole history of his adventures upon the road. As soon as he had finished, she began to unfold her plans.

Her usual plea of indisposition was, of course, immediately advanced; and, as it hitherto had always succeeded, she was not a little astonished when the first words he uttered in reply to

her request, "That she might go over to England with him, as he was going, just to see what Leicestershire was like," were these—

"My dear Leonora, it is too late! I asked you a thousand times to go there, and you never would hear of it; and just now, when I have no house, you want to go with me."

"No house! Why, there is a cottage, and you have always told me a very good one!"

"So it is; but, as you did not choose to occupy it, I let the cottage to Stapleton two months ago, and he is in it with his family at this moment."

"How very provoking!" exclaimed Leonora; "but surely there are other houses in the neighbourhood that we could take?"

"Yes; but they cost money, and that is just what I have not got. I cannot afford to move a whole houseful of people every month or two. Indeed, Leonora, you must be reasonable! You chose to come to Paris—you insisted upon it—and now here you must remain."

"I can't stay here!" she abruptly replied;
"I have taken a dislike to the place—I am not well, and I must have change of scene and change of air."

"Then, why not go to Enghien or somewhere near? You really do look pale!" replied Mr. Devereux, looking anxiously at her.

"No; I am sick of France—I must go to England—I am determined to go; so we may as well go together, and take the children! It will do them good. As to me, I am tired of this place, completely tired!" she fretfully answered.

"Well, then, if you choose to go, you must go by yourself," said Mr. Devereux in a firm tone.

"And why by myself? I thought you had settled to go to-morrow."

"I am going out of town, but not to England: I, too, change my mind sometimes," he replied, with an attempt at a smile.

"Not to England! Then, where can you be

going to?" exclaimed Leonora, in a tone of surprise.

"Only to Norway!" he said, with a timid air, as if he expected his proposed journey to meet with violent opposition; and then, as Leonora only looked wonderingly at him, he took courage, and went on, "You see, De Sénac and the Marquis D'Epseuil are just starting on a fishing expedition. They have got a splendid yacht, English-built and an English crew, so they wanted some one to talk to the men, and asked me to join them; you have no objection, have you, Leonora? As the hunting is just over, I accepted their offer, and we settled to start to-morrow for Cherbourg."

"An excellent plan!" said Leonora, readily; for any thing that secured the absence of her husband from Paris at that moment was certain to meet with her approval; and then she added carelessly—

"And I must manage my English expedition as I can."

"You can do as you like; but recollect the expense of moving, now that we have two children. Remember, too, we have taken this house for a year."

"Oh! it can be let. Houses always let well here; and what does the expense signify? You are always talking of expense now," she pettishly replied.

"Because I am obliged—the truth is, I am terribly hard up!"

"The more shame for your rich brother! He has no other heir than you. Why can't you ask him for money?"

"Because," replied her husband nervously, "it would be of no use. He has been so generous already; I dare not ask him for more!"

"A very misplaced delicacy," said Leonora sneeringly; "but you know I never interfere with your money—only pray be so good as to leave me some before you go: I can't get on here without it. Two or

three hundred pounds will do for the present."

"Leonora," said Mr. Devereux seriously, "I may as well tell you the truth at once. I have not a farthing!"

"What nonsense!" was the reply in a very careless tone.

"It is true, however. All my resources are utterly exhausted. I have borne it as long as I could in silence, but now I must come to you to help me."

"Me! how can I help you, when you know that I have no money even for myself? You know it perfectly well," was the reply.

"Yes!" answered the timid husband, blushing deeply, "I do know it; but you have the means of getting money at your command which I have not. You have jewels?"

The start with which Leonora received the word, made him pause for a moment in his speech—but he speedily resumed.

"You have a great many more jewels than

you can want, Leonora. Why not sell some of them?"

"Certainly not," replied Leonora, vehemently; but she gasped for breath as she spoke.

"Only one row of those immense diamonds would realize a large sum—or, if you did not like actually to part with them, I know a person who would advance a good deal of money upon them, and in whose hands they would be quite safe. Perhaps that would be the best plan."

"What—pawn my jewels, like Madame de L'Esterre? Never!" exclaimed Leonora, with an hysterical laugh.

"You seem to have very little inclination to help me," said Mr. Devereux in a tone of deep mortification, which the flashing eyes of his wife certainly justified. There was more anger than pity in her look, though she said quietly—

"My dear Stuart, you quite mistake me! I should be very glad to help you if I could; but it is quite impossible. I should never be

able to show my face again, if people could say that I had sold my diamonds to pay your debts."

"They would only think you a very devoted wife if you did so. But I do not ask you to sell them outright," he observed, anxiously.

"Pawning them would be much worse—do you think I would ever condescend to wear one of them again? It would be horrible—scandalous—quite! A diamond necklace in a pawnbroker's shop one day, and on a lady's neck the next! It is not to be thought of for a moment."

"I don't see that at all; and, besides, who talked of pawnbrokers? Money-lenders are not pawnbrokers."

"Much the same thing, in my opinion. Nothing should induce me even to open my lips to any one of the kind," said Leonora haughtily; and so painful was the impression her selfish want of consideration for him

created in the mind of her husband, that it roused up a spirit of independence he had never before dared to show, and he answered in a tone nearly as disagreeable as that in which she had spoken—

“You seem to forget, that what I ask as a favour, I have only to claim as a right, if I chose to do so!”

“I do not understand you,” answered Leonora, scarcely more civilly than before; for she hoped by her peremptory manner to deter her usually submissive husband from any further advance upon what she knew to be such dangerous ground.

“So it seems—nor the law either; since you suppose a woman can have any property that does not belong to her husband, unless specially settled upon her at her marriage. You may remember that your jewels were not settled upon you.”

“Settled! No! since I was idiot enough to run away. But promised, yes!—for how

often did you not tell me, they were exclusively my own?"

"And so they shall be eventually," replied Stuart Devereux, softening, in spite of himself, as the early days of his marriage rose to his memory, and then he added—"I only wanted to make a temporary use of some of them—a very small part. I am in great distress for money. Leonora, can you refuse?"

"Most certainly I can! I will lend myself to no such disgraceful arrangement. If you can legally claim what a point of honour should decide is my own property, then do so. Until then, I shall beg leave to take care of my own things."

"Then you positively refuse?" said her husband, hoarsely.

"Positively!" was her laconic reply, and pronounced in a clear, steady tone, which betrayed neither weakness nor fear; and, rising from her chair, she swept across the room, with a high incensed air. Mr. Devereux

rose also, and, as she laid her hand upon the lock of the door, he said in an almost inaudible voice:—

“Then let the consequences fall upon your own head.”

Leonora made no reply, nor did she give one look towards him, but disappeared, and shut herself into her own room; while her husband, with an expression of deep dejection upon his countenance, retired to his apartments, which were on the other side of the drawing-room. A heavy secret was on his heart, and was now more closely locked within it than he had ever intended it should be; for the merciless want of sympathy he had experienced, when he looked for pity and support, had turned that heart to stone. Leonora, in her hard eagerness to save herself, had severed the only tie by which that safety could have been secured; but, without even a suspicion of the case, she exulted in the seeming security she had gained. Once more Fate appeared propitious to her

plans; for, in this new and distant journey of her husband's, she perceived a more certain benefit to herself than even had the contemplated departure for England taken place.

Once Mr. Devereux had quitted Paris, she was comparatively safe, and need be in no hurry to leave her home—indeed, it might even be more advisable to remain a little longer, in order to watch the proceedings of the Prince and Princess Botzaris, and if possible to counteract their attempts to inflict injury upon her. Tranquillized by the improvement in her prospects, Leonora retired to rest, and for the first time since the ball at court tasted the happiness of repose. But while the cruel and guilty wife was enjoying an unmerited cessation of the agonizing fear by which she had been for so many hours oppressed, her unhappy husband seemed to have suddenly changed places with her, and taken up the load of sorrow which she had just laid down. No sooner had he entered his room, than, freed

from the restraint which the presence of the unfeeling Leonora had imposed, he gave way to the pent-up sorrow that had so long swelled within his heart: he sat down by the table, and wept bitterly and long. He had good cause for tears; for he well knew that, at least for some time to come, that night must be his last within his home. The penalty for the long course of reckless extravagance he had pursued, was at length about to be inflicted: if the morning light found him in Paris, he would infallibly be arrested for debt. A friendly voice had warned him of his danger, but too late to avert the blow. Had Leonora come promptly and nobly to his aid, some arrangement might have been made; but her refusal was fatal: his debts were far too considerable to allow him to hope for any secret mode of compromising the affair. The alarm once given—all his creditors would be upon his track; and he preferred the odium of an ignominious flight to the tenderness of their mercy,

and a sojourn of an uncertain duration within the walls of Clichy. By a fortunate coincidence, the fishing party, which was not a fictitious excuse, had just been suggested in time; and if he could reach Cherbourg in safety, of which there was little doubt, he would evade the vigilance of his pursuers, and remain at a distance until his affairs were arranged.

He had no preparations to make; for every thing had been silently got ready during the last three days, when he had been supposed to be absent from Paris; but he had in reality never quitted that city, and had merely returned to his home in order to make the attempt upon the generosity of Leonora, which had just proved so fruitless. Nothing remained for him, apparently, but to seize upon the jewels by force; but he preferred that others should execute that very unpleasant task, which he doubted not would ere long be the case. It was almost with a savage feeling of joy that he contemplated this probability, and pictured to

himself the fury of Leonora, who would now be forced to yield to the merciless hand of the law, that which she had refused to his prayers.

This was the heart which he had once thought all softness and love! His eyes appeared suddenly opened; for her selfish hardness had changed all his feelings in a moment. As he thought upon it again and again, his courage appeared to revive. Why should he grieve so deeply at leaving a woman who had shown so little pity or affection for him? He dried his tears as this reflection forced itself upon him; and in a short time appeared to have recovered his composure, and busied himself with some few arrangements he desired to make before his departure. One alone was of any material consequence, and that was his first care. He wrote a long and affectionate letter to his brother—not asking for aid, but confiding to him, in case of his own death, the sole guardianship of his children. This

letter he intended to put in the post when he should arrive at a little distance from Paris. He carefully deposited it in his pocket, and took also the miniatures of his infant daughters, which were lying upon the table. These were all the treasures he intended to appropriate to himself; and, his preparations being all completed, he had nothing more to do. He looked at the clock—it was upon the stroke of ten. In another hour he was to depart! Even then, a friend who was upon the watch waited for him in the street; but as the Marquis D'Epseuil, with whom he was to travel, could not set out before the hour he had named, he preferred remaining to the last moment in his own house.

Full of remorse and shame was now that weak and foolish heart, that had so long set at naught the counsels of judicious friends. As he thought of his brother, and the disgrace he was about to bring upon his name, his spirit sunk within him. He had not, however, very

long to endure the torturing reflections which this hour of solitude, ere he could steal in silence from his home, had brought crowding to his mind. But a little while had elapsed since, wrapped in his cloak, he had thrown himself upon the sofa, in the vain hope of being able to sleep, when the bell of the apartment was rung loudly. As he had sent all his servants to bed, he had no alternative but to open the door himself, which he did, thinking it was his friend who had called for him sooner than he expected; but he was disappointed, for it was only the secretary of the Prince Botzaris with a letter in his hand.

“Ah, Vincenzo—is it you? Come in!” he exclaimed as he recognised the man, who, making a low bow, replied—

“I beg your pardon, sir; but this packet is for Mrs. Devereux—can I not see her?”

“I am afraid not, Vincenzo. She has been gone to bed some time.”

“Then, perhaps, you will receive the packet

for her? I was desired to bring a receipt ; for there are jewels inside," said Vincenza.

"Jewels!" exclaimed Mr. Devereux in amazement, and opening the packet. "Oh, yes! I see there are—it is all right—you may say that I have received them—good-night, Vincenzo!"

The man bowed and instantly withdrew, and Mr. Devereux, to whom the very word "jewels" had an irritating sound, thought himself fully justified, by his present circumstances, in ascertaining the reasons why any of his wife's jewels were thus intrusted to strangers. His first impression was, that the letter contained some ornament which she had lent to the princess ; and, going up to the lamp that stood upon the table, he opened the paper more fully than he had yet done. The jewels fell out of the cotton in which they were wrapped; they consisted of two small diamond clasps and a bracelet in the form of a chain. He had seen Leonora wear them, and recognised them at once. They were accompanied by a note, and

a long paper which at first looked to him like a legal document. More and more surprised, he opened the note, which contained these words:—

“Madam, we ask but for our rights ; and therefore, in the name of the Princess Botzaris, I return to you three small diamond ornaments, not included in the list of those which, on her leaving the house of her husband the Marchese Colonna, remained in his possession. Lest, at any future time, you might be tempted to doubt the accuracy of the statement made to you by the princess, I enclose you a copy of the deed, the original of which is here and can at any moment be produced, by which you will find that all the jewels contained in the casket given to you by the Marchese Colonna had been settled upon his wife at her marriage—they having been a portion of her own fortune. You will see, therefore, that the Marchese had no right to dispose of them, and that we have done but an act of justice to our-

selves in re-demanding our own property. As to your other acts of treachery towards the princess both here and at Florence, she desires me to say that she pities you and forgives them.

“THEODORE BOTZARIS.”

Twice did the horror-stricken husband, to whom the double guilt of his wife was thus suddenly revealed, read over the terrible words that assured him of the fact; and then, with a courage of which he scarcely seemed capable, he also examined the paper alluded to in the letter. It was, as described, a copy of a deed, and left no doubt upon his mind that every word contained in the letter of the Prince Botzaris was strictly true. A deep groan of anguish burst from his lips. And this was the woman for whom he had sacrificed himself, and by whom he had been beguiled into a belief that she was virtuous and true! And this woman was his wife—the

mother of his children! His decision was instantly taken—he would see her face no more!

With a calmness that showed the awful nature of his grief, he folded up the jewels and all the papers, and, adding to them the letter he had previously written, directed the packet to his brother. Cost what it might, he would venture to leave it himself at the hotel. There was something so solemn in the awful punishment that had fallen upon this erring man, and the manner in which he bowed before it, that his faults and foibles would have been forgotten by any one who had witnessed the profound nature of his grief; but there was no eye to mark the bitter tears as they fell—no voice to speak a word of comfort to that outraged and broken heart! He had been the artificer of his own misery, and he must bear it unheeded and alone. Not one word could he bring himself to write to his brother upon the subject. At some future time he might do so—for he never intended to return, or to see Leonora

•

again ; but now it was impossible. And so he went forth from his home to the banishment which his own vanity and folly had rendered his portion for life !

CHAPTER XVII.

WITH the happy feeling of having obtained a reprieve from instant danger, Leonora awoke the next morning ; and with the impression of her own comparative safety came a gleam of gratitude towards the unoffending being who had so gently yielded his own pretensions to her imperious will. She could not but feel that, had her husband insisted upon his obvious rights, her position must now have been very different from what it was, and she had suffered too much from constant fear, not to be thankful for even a momentary repose. That death-like sinking of the heart, which she had so tremblingly endured, would now no longer take possession of her, at least for a time ; and, as usual, she looked to time as to her most

efficient protector. Her husband, once removed from all possible contact with the persons she most dreaded on the earth, might be long before he should discover her loss; and her active imagination already busied itself in devising schemes by which that loss might be accounted for. An accident in travelling; the carelessness or dishonesty of servants, or some such plausible tale, might be devised; and, although she could not deceive herself with the hope that so heavy a misfortune would be endured in silence, she, as usual, trusted to her own cleverness for contriving to shift the responsibility from herself, and at the same time stifle all inquiries that should be made. It certainly would be no easy task, nor a very safe one; but at all events the danger was at a distance, and in the mean time she would so regulate her conduct and communications with others, as to enable her the better to carry out her plans.

Full of these consoling reflections, Leonora arose from her bed with renovated hope and

courage, and, having completed her toilet, went into the drawing room, and sat down in her great arm-chair by the fire. She wanted to think quietly and deeply over the altered position of her affairs, and to decide upon the best course for her to pursue during the absence of her husband, which she calculated would certainly not be less than of a month's duration; but of that, as well as other minor particulars, she intended fully to inform herself when he should come in to breakfast. As this with him was always rather late in the day, she waited at first with undisturbed tranquillity; but as the hours passed on, she began to grow impatient, and, ringing the bell, she desired Mr. Devereux to be told that she was expecting him in the drawing-room. She was immediately informed "that he had left the house during the night, and had not returned;" a piece of intelligence to which she listened with mingled pleasure, surprise, and dismay. His departure secured her peace; but, as he had not mentioned his in-

attention of starting so immediately upon his journey, she could not account for the rapidity of his movements, which threatened to involve her in a very disagreeable dilemma, for she had not nearly money enough in her possession for the current expenses of her house, in case his absence should be prolonged. She still, however, did not believe that he had finally left Paris, and went into his room to see if any traces of his intentions could be there discovered. All was exactly in its customary order, and she sent immediately to the porter, and also to the houses of the Marquis d'Epseuil, and the Count de Sénac, to know at what hour the party had quitted Paris for Cherbourg. The answer she received left her no further doubt.

The three gentlemen had met at the house of the Marquis D'Epseuil, in the Rue de Lille, a little before twelve, and had immediately set out upon their journey. This hurried arrangement was very annoying to Leonora, not only

on account of the pecuniary inconvenience likely to arise from it, but from the painful impression that she and her husband had parted on very unfriendly terms; and she had now no opportunity of either atoning for the pain she had inflicted, or, what was still more important in her eyes, fully subduing the flickerings of independence and spirit which had manifested themselves in the tone and manner of the usually yielding and submissive Stuart. While she regretted the haughty violence of her own demeanour upon the occasion, she felt that it still required to be followed up by the persuasive eloquence she so well knew how to use; but this sudden escape from her tyranny was a bad omen of future obedience, and she now bitterly repented the course she had pursued. It was, however, too late, and she must suffer for the rash haste by which, in endeavouring to crush her victim, she had driven him from her toils.


The first consequences of this oversight, in permitting her fiercely imperious temper to

outrun her usually cautious dissimulation, were soon apparent to Leonora by the complication of her domestic difficulties—difficulties that were of a nature peculiarly repugnant to her. She could not bear the petty squabbings of tradesmen, the complainings of servants, or any other of those minor ills of everyday life, by which most households are more or less beset; and as, before many days had elapsed, threatenings of these misfortunes had begun to raise their warning voice, she set herself to work in order to avert the evil she soon would be unable to confront.

In anticipation of her speedy removal from Paris, a point upon which she was fully determined, she resolved immediately to reduce her extravagant establishment, and curtail the useless luxuries in which she had hitherto indulged. She dismissed all her supernumerary servants, gave up her opera-box and carriage-horses, and no longer lined her staircase with hothouse flowers at the cost of a guinea a-day. This

wonderful accession of prudence was more dictated by its consonance with the plan of total seclusion which she meant to adopt during the time she must still remain in Paris, than by any sincere belief in the absolute necessity of such sacrifices; for she had been so accustomed to see her husband "get money," as he expressed himself in speaking of his constant borrowings, that she could never imagine an actual want of the common necessities of life.

Fully expecting that, at the end of the month, Mr. Devereux would return as usual to his home, her only efforts were to get through that month without embarrassment, and have every thing ready for her journey to England the moment her husband appeared. In order the better to carry out her plan, and break off the habits of intimacy she had formed with a multitude of dear friends, she took her children to Enghien, and remained there for several days; having left word at her house that, not feeling well, she had gone to the country for



change of air. This effectually dispersed the knot of idlers that continually had surrounded her, and was sufficient excuse for her constant refusal of all invitations.

People had not time to inquire every day how she was, or ascertain when she was coming back, and so she was left at last to her retirement without molestation. At the end of three weeks she was heartily tired of her new life; and the excitement always attendant upon a total change of habits having passed away, she went back to her sorrows and her fears, and mourned incessantly over the loss of those glittering baubles that had formed the chief happiness of her existence. Her whole view of life seemed utterly changed since they had been torn from her grasp. Independent of their more substantial value, her jewels had been to her her joy and her pride; and the privation of them seemed to have given a death-blow to both. The recovery of her letters did not even comfort her for their loss.


They had acquired even a double importance in her eyes since she had been deprived of them ; and, when she pictured to herself the gorgeous figure of the Princess Botzaris decked out in all the splendour she had so long considered her own, her anger and mortification knew no bounds. She would have done any thing, suffered any thing, to be revenged upon the woman who had thus, in one moment, hurled her from the pinnacle of bliss—cut short all the triumph she had but just begun to taste ; but the hope died within her ere yet it had dawned. She was totally helpless. The princess was beyond her reach, and hitherto her attempts at vengeance had signally failed ; and her own danger was still too imminent for her to run any further risk of exposure by coming in contact with persons who held so weighty a secret in their hand. How they would use that power she shuddered to contemplate, for she well knew what her own conduct would have been upon a similar occasion ; but still a vague

longing to know the worst, tortured her mind.

Since her forced seclusion had begun, she had not heard a word of what was passing in that world which she had so suddenly deserted. The season was almost over, and most of her friends were, she knew, going to the country about that time. A few stealthy inquiries were all that she dared to make, for fear of attracting attention to herself. She had found out that Sir Edward Devereux had left Paris; but of the Prince or Princess Botzaris she had not ventured to ask. Could she but have known, that, from motives of delicacy towards Sir Edward and her husband, they had left Paris much earlier than they had intended, what a great amount of suffering she might have been spared! She remained, however, perfectly ignorant upon this point; and, such was her terror of meeting again the woman she had so deeply wronged, that she never left her house until nightfall. Her miserable life was

passed in watching for some communication from without, that might guide her a little upon her path ; but she watched in vain, for hitherto none had reached her. The days passed on, and one week was added to another, and yet she remained precisely in the same state, and now every day became more perplexing and harassing than the former.

The silence of her husband was an enigma she could not explain. She had not written to him, for she did not know where to direct his letters ; but that he should not have sent her even one line, was so contrary to his usual habits, that she could not account for the change. Nearly two months had now passed since he had left her ; and she began, at last, to feel seriously alarmed. Her money was very nearly exhausted, and, an appeal to her bankers having been refused, she beheld the day fast approaching when the actual means of existence for herself and her household




would be positively wanting. She did not even know to whom to write in order to make known her distress; for, except his banker at Paris, she had not the least idea who were the persons with whom her husband transacted his business. She had taken too little interest in any thing that concerned him to inquire how he managed his affairs. He had always given her money whenever she had asked for it; and, though she must have known the means by which he generally obtained his supplies, she had never scrupled spending to the uttermost farthing the sums that, in his weak generosity, he unhesitatingly lavished upon her. The first bitter pangs of distress and disgrace showed, at least in one point of view, what was the value of a husband's protection and support. Abandoned to her own resources, what could she do? Nothing but weep and lament. Not, alas! over her many sins and misdeeds; but, fretful and rebellious, she angrily bewailed the mischances of her life, inces-

santly accusing an adverse fate as the cause of her unmerited wrongs.

In this disposition she went on, counting the hours as they passed; but day after day glided by, and brought no amelioration to her state. The solitude to which she had condemned herself became almost unbearable, and a craving desire for some change from the monotony of her present existence, seemed to take the place of every other feeling. It came at last, that long prayed-for change; but in a very different form from that which she might have expected.

As she was sitting one morning in her solitary room, looking listlessly at the constantly changing scene which the view from her windows presented, a letter was brought to her. It was from the Duchesse de Monti, a lady who had once been her constant companion, but who perhaps, among all the intimate friends she had so hastily abandoned, was the particular one she the least wished either to see or consult in any difficulty; for she well knew her



gossiping propensities, and her intense curiosity upon the subject of her neighbours' affairs. It was therefore with no very pleasurable feelings that she opened the letter, which she supposed only to contain some of the oft-repeated lamentations over the indisposition that deprived her of the society of "the dearest of all her friends." What was her surprise when the following words met her eye:—

"MY DEAREST LEONORA—I have called so often in vain, that I will not risk being sent away again by that shake of the head of your cross old porter, which I know so well. I therefore take the more certain way of letting you know a piece of news, most interesting to you, and which may not yet have reached you in your sick-room. It is nothing less than the sudden death of Sir Edward Devereux. It seems he has been drowned by the upsetting of a boat in some great river in Norway, where he was with a fishing-party. I don't know whether to condole with, or congratulate you—but I think

I may venture on the latter more agreeable course, as you and your brother-in-law were not friends, and you will now be one of the greatest ladies in England. I will go over next year and see you, if you will invite me to your castle, which I hear is superb. In the mean time, you must get well and come out again. Your mourning will not prevent your going about in the mornings, at least. *A propos*, I recommend Clementine to you; she is the only person who can make a tolerable black bonnet—that most frightful of all things; but you need not mind—you will look beautiful in any thing. Make haste and re-appear in all your splendour, and believe ever in the devotion, and sincerity, and tenderest affection of,

“IDA DE MONTI.”

Was it a dream, or could it be reality? Leonora sat as if turned to stone, with the letter lying open before her. She had tried to

read it twice, but it seemed as if her sight failed her. She was looking at the words without being a second time able to take in their sense. It was a long time before she recovered her senses, so stunning had been the effect of such unlooked for intelligence; but she did recover at last, and then immediately perceived how very probable was the event which she had so little anticipated. Sir Edward had naturally joined the fishing party in which her husband was included, and this also accounted for the long-continued silence on his part; for, knowing her objection to his seeking the society of his brother, he had not dared to inform her of their being together—much less of the catastrophe which had just occurred.

The mystery in which all had been so long involved was at length cleared up; and, as every thing was now explained, she turned her attention to the more immediate steps which the marvellously altered position in which she stood necessarily entailed upon her. Her first care

must be, to ascertain whether the astounding news she had just received was positively true; and, although she had little doubt of its being substantially correct, she was eager to learn more details of the circumstance than the letter of the duchess afforded. She immediately, therefore, sent for a carriage and proceeded to the English embassy, in order to make the inquiries she deemed necessary upon the occasion. As she drove along the street, what a thrill of happiness re-animated her whole being! The very sensation of freedom, which she experienced after her long imprisonment, was in itself an inexpressible delight. Arrived at her destination, the intelligence of the fatal accident was fully confirmed; it having been in fact from the embassy that the duchess had first received the news, although, in her hurry to talk about Mademoiselle Clementine and her black bonnets, she had forgotten to mention this important fact.

There being now no longer any doubt upon

the subject, Leonora had only once more to retire to her home, and affect what tolerable appearance of sympathy and sorrow she might think it necessary to display. She, however, had quite sufficiently enjoyed the pleasures of solitude and seclusion to satisfy her for the present; and, before many hours had passed, she had made up her mind to assert her new-born independence, by putting into execution the plan she had long contemplated of leaving Paris, and returning to England.

With a proud, exulting heart she remembered, that at least now she had a home to which she might return; and she smiled as thoughts of the dilemma upon this point in which she had so lately stood recurred to her. Happy, however, and triumphant as she was, she did not overlook the smallest trifle that might increase her consequence, and the consideration in which she delighted to be held; and she almost hesitated in deciding upon her immediate journey, when she reflected that it

would prevent her having her cards printed with her new name upon them, in order to send round to her friends.

As this, however, was a misfortune that could be in some degree remedied by substituting written ones in their place, she resolved that it should not be the cause of delay, and, hastily preparing the important missives, she despatched them, accompanied by innumerable notes of adieu, to all her acquaintances in Paris. Before the next day, therefore, had passed, the whole town would be in possession of the important fact of her having become "Lady Devereux," accompanied by the intelligence that she was gone to England to take possession, in the absence of her husband, of his magnificent castle and estates. This she well knew would in no small degree excite the envy and surprise of her friends—a circumstance which was not at all displeasing to her, especially in the case of the "tender and affectionate" Duchesse de Monti, who had always displayed a much

stronger admiration for her deceased brother-in-law than she herself was inclined to approve.

With her brain turning with all these little thoughts, and her heart throbbing with exultation and pride, Leonora at length quitted Paris. It was just two days since her accession to her dignity, and in that short space of time she appeared to have driven from her mind all remembrance of the past: sorrow and fear, humiliation and anxiety, were alike consigned to oblivion, and, radiant in her anticipations of power and wealth, she sped triumphantly on her way. Happiness—in her acceptation of the word—was at length, and for the first time, within her grasp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER a stormy passage, Leonora found herself once more in England; but, having been accompanied by her children, her movements were too much fettered to allow of her proceeding as rapidly as she wished to the end of her interesting journey. Her nurses were so clamorous on behalf of their precious charges, who had never before undergone the fatigue of travelling, that she found herself compelled to attend to their admonitions, and allow them a few hours' repose. Repose, however, was too uncongenial to her, in her present state of excitement, to make it of any value. It bore too much the semblance of delay; and delay in beholding the splendour that awaited her, was martyrdom that she could not endure. She

therefore determined to pursue her journey alone; and, having comfortably established both nurses and children in the hotel at Folkestone, she gave directions that they should remain there until she came or sent for them; and then, accompanied only by her maid, took her departure for London. The next day she arrived at the nearest station to Atherston Castle, which was about eight miles from it. She would be obliged to pass through Whittington on her way to the castle; but that did not discompose her in the least: she even looked with complacency on the identical bright yellow fly, waiting at the station, and which she instantly recognised as the one belonging to the White Hart. The good-humoured face, however, of Tim Sikes, no longer smiled from its box; for he had long since been promoted to the higher office of stage-coachman, and plied his labours in a contrary direction.

Leonora, though she would gladly have made her entry to her new abode with more becom-

ing splendour, was fain to take advantage of the only mode of conveyance that presented itself, and was soon safely ensconced in the yellow fly, and proceeding on her way. As she passed through the village, a contemptuous feeling of disdain was the chief impression she experienced; but as the villa of her old friend, Belinda White, caught her eye, she looked anxiously beyond it; for the white spire of the village church was gleaming in the sunshine, and at its foot she well knew was her father's grave.

A few tears to his memory was all the tribute that duteous daughter paid to one whose love for her had laid him where he slept; and then her thoughts went back to their old train, and her chief sorrow was that he had not lived to see that day, when, enthroned in all her grandeur, she might bid defiance to anxiety or care. Every moment now, as she rapidly advanced upon her journey, was fraught with new delight; for each object on which her eye rested was her own—the estate

of Atherston extending nearly to the village. At last the castle rose proudly before her; for, situated on a rising ground, it could be seen from every part of the country. As she reached the park gates, her heart beat with so tumultuous a joy that she could not make the inquiry she had intended, as to whether any news had been received of her husband's return. She leaned back in the carriage, breathless with delight and admiration.

She had never before been within the walls of the park, and its beauty and magnificence rendered her speechless. Every charm that wood, water, and the richest verdure could combine, was there in profusion, and added to a wild abruptness that redoubled the picturesque effect of the glorious landscape, while the massive grandeur of the castle made perfect the whole. At the first glance over the splendid scenery around, there was an instant impression on the mind of the beholder of its being an "ancient heritage:" that was not

to be mistaken, and Leonora, as she gazed upon it, actually trembled with joy. It was a possession after her own heart. And it was her own—rightfully and unquestionably her own; and she had won it for herself! How light every sacrifice now seemed!

Oppressed with an almost suffocating sensation, she scarcely perceived when she had passed beneath the gateway of the castle, and the carriage stood at a smaller door in the centre of the large court-yard. She got out mechanically, and followed the servant who had opened the door. So bewildered was she by her emotion, and the scene in which she found herself, that she could take but little note of the splendour which the interior of the castle presented. She only observed that she was passing through a magnificent hall, ornamented with pictures and statues, and the roof of which was so high she could scarcely see the carvings upon it. After this, two large rooms were traversed, and as they reached the door of the third, the

voice of her conductor recalled her to herself.

"What name, ma'am, shall I say?" he civilly inquired, as his hand rested upon the lock of the door.

"Lady Devereux!" instantly replied Leonora, and then she added in a tone of surprise; "but who is here?"

"Only Mr. Saunderson, the solicitor. He came last night," answered the servant, as he threw open the door of the library, and announced Leonora as desired. With her usual stately manner she walked into the room. A large table was in the centre of it, and, ere she could reach it, she heard her name repeated by the person who sat before it, and whose back was turned towards her as she entered.

"Mr. Saunderson—I suppose!" she said, with a gracious bow, and a smile she meant to be very conciliating.

The person so addressed made no reply, but, without leaving his chair, twisted him-

self suddenly round upon it, and looked at her from head to foot. He was a middle-sized thin man, with a hooked nose, iron-grey hair, and looked extremely clean and gentlemanlike; which indeed was the only actual expression about either his face or figure; the latter being in no way remarkable, while the former was a perfect nullity. He might have been possessed of every vice or perfection in the whole category of good or bad qualities, and yet his countenance would never for an instant have betrayed the working of his mind. It was a most invaluable face for a man who had secrets to keep; and, as Leonora looked upon it, she could not in the least decide whether it was admiration, surprise, incivility, curiosity, or awkwardness, that made him sit staring at her in the wonderful manner he was doing, without speaking a word. His spectacles were on his nose, and he looked first through, then over, and then under them, before he finally took them off; and, when he had

completed this performance, he rose from his chair, and pushing another close to Leonora, as if inviting her to take it, he reseated himself, and said in a voice as passionless as his face—

“Yes—I am Mr. Saunderson ! Is there any thing I can do to serve you ?”

“No, thank you—not at present—not just yet ! I am only this moment arrived,” Leonora answered with great sweetness ; and she cast her eyes round the room with a childish look of delight, as if examining its noble proportions.

It was a fine room, furnished with green wherever it was not lined with bookcases. A splendid old clock of foreign workmanship stood in the centre window, and writing-tables, sofas, and chairs, were gathered round the fireplace, where a large wood fire was burning brightly on the hearth. Leonora, tired with her journey, thought she had never seen any thing so luxuriously comfortable as that room. As she did not speak, Mr. Saunderson quietly turned round

to the table, and resumed the examination of some papers which he had been reading when her entrance had disturbed him. And so several minutes were passed, until Leonora, somewhat rested and refreshed, began to think she might as well try and gain some of the information she so much needed, as permit the apparently taciturn being before her to enjoy uninterrupted silence while he occupied her room. She therefore, without any preliminary, said to him in the gentlest of accents—

“Perhaps, Mr. Saunderson, you would be good enough to inform me, whether any more particulars of this shocking event have been received?”

“None since yesterday, I believe I am correct in stating,” he instantly replied, and turning round upon his chair, as if touched by a spring.

“But how did it happen—and how was it discovered?” she next inquired.

“It was not discovered, it seems, ma’am, until several days after it had happened. It appears

that the party had separated—probably in order better to divide the sport,” he replied.

“Indeed! I had no idea of that—in fact, I know very little about it, Mr. Saunderson, for I am only just arrived from Paris.” Mr. Saunderson, who thought that this had nothing at all to do with the subject, made no answer, but cast a wistful glance at his papers, and Leonora went on.

“But who gave the first information about the accident? It seems to me a very mysterious affair.”

“No!” replied Mr. Saunderson, calmly; “there has been no mystery at all about any thing. The Marquis D’Epseuil’s letters are clear and distinct upon the subject. He it was who found the body, after it had been to all appearance three days in the water.”

“But how could it have happened? Had there been a storm, or was the river a dangerous one?” she asked eagerly.

“There had been no storm—and the water



was calm and beautiful. That is what gave the marquis the idea of suicide having been committed," said Mr. Saunderson in his usual quiet way, and wiping his spectacles as he spoke.

"Suicide!" echoed Leonora, in a tone of surprise and horror.

"Yes! for the boat was found in its proper position, with the oars safe inside."

"I thought the boat had upset—at least so it was reported in Paris," observed Leonora, looking doubtingly at her laconic companion.

"Not at all, ma'am!—the account came just as I have told you; that is what inclines Sir Edward to be of the same opinion."

"Sir Stuart," suggested Leonora blandly; and then she added—"but perhaps you can tell me, Mr. Saunderson, when and by whom the last letters have been received here from my husband?"

"I have not the honour of knowing to whom you allude," was the satisfactory reply.

"Why—to Sir Stuart Devereux, of course!" said Leonora, somewhat haughtily; "as you are the family solicitor, I thought you might have received some directions from him."

"Oh, Mr. Devereux!" replied the matter-of-fact Mr. Saunderson, beginning, for the first time, to understand who the beautiful lady was to whom he had been talking so long. "Well, not very lately, ma'am—his last letter is, I think, dated about three weeks before his death."

"His death!" echoed Leonora, wildly—"his death! Did I hear right? My husband, Sir Stuart Devereux, dead!" and she looked as she really felt—horrified and shocked.

"It is too true that Mr. Devereux is dead!" was the calm reply.

"Sir Edward drowned—Stuart dead! both brothers gone in a moment!" cried Leonora, frantically.

"No—you mistake there, ma'am! You have probably been led into error, like many people,

by a word having been left out in the telegraphic message. It was Mr. Devereux who was drowned; Sir Edward is here now, and in good health, but terribly cast down by his brother's death, and other circumstances too delicate for me to mention," replied Mr. Saunderson, in the same imperturbable voice.

Leonora, pale as death, struck her hands violently together—

"I see it all!" she said in a hoarse whisper. "Take me from hence—I cannot stay—I must be gone!" and, gasping for breath, she started from her chair, and, tottering towards him, she held out both hands imploringly to him who, as she felt, had just pronounced her doom.

"You cannot go as you are—you had better not!" he replied, without betraying the slightest emotion, though actually terrified at the sufferings of the beautiful creature before him.

"Take me away—I cannot stay—I shall die if I stay here!" she cried vehemently, and the ghastly look of her face fully bore out her

words. Without another observation, Mr. Saunderson gently placed her arm within his, and led her tenderly and slowly through the rooms, as he would have guided the first steps of a young child; and, when they reached the door of the hall, he paused and said to her in a low voice—

“You are right! It is better you should go; for I do not think Sir Edward would have seen you:—time may do much!” His voice was unchanged, for it could not change—but there was the slightest possible shadow of sympathy in the last words he had uttered, and the breaking heart of the wretched Leonora well-nigh gave way before it; but she only looked up at the stony face beside her, and gently pressed the arm on which she leaned.

Her proud spirit bore her through—she drove back the cry that was bursting from her lips—she would not utter a complaint within those walls. Mr. Saunderson led her to the carriage, placed her within it, and hurried back to the library,

and then he burst into a passion of tears. Now that he knew her whole history—for Sir Edward had confided it to him, and even charged him with making a suitable provision for her and her children—his very soul was moved to anguish for the future fate of one so lovely and so lost.

“To the Hermitage!” had been the reply of Leonora, when asked for directions as to where she wished to go; and, without once opening her eyes during the sad sad hour her journey lasted, she arrived at the dwelling of Belinda White. Awful was the meeting that took place between the former friends. Leonora, creeping to her presence, knelt down before her, and laid her head upon the lap of the surprised and terrified woman.

“Belinda,” she said, “I am come here to die!” and the gentle-hearted creature, to whom all was known—both the sorrow and the sin—forgot in an instant the world and herself; and, raising the wanderer to her breast, promised

her a shelter and a home. Nobly she fulfilled her promise; for from that day Leonora left the Hermitage no more. Her words, however, had been prophetic; for her death-blow had been given when she felt that all hope was lost.

In spite of the tender cares of Belinda White, and the growing beauty and endearing love of her own two precious babes, she never for a moment rallied; but, after many months of pining, sunk and faded gradually from the earth, like a beauteous flower beneath the wintry blight. Not alone, however, or uncared for, were her last days passed; for the simple goodness of her who had taken her under her fostering wing, soon worked its way to that misguided heart, so long closed against aught but worldly hope and trust.

Led, by the pure counsels and unaffected piety of Belinda White, to higher thoughts, repentance came at last; and, acknowledging the sinfulness of her past life, Leonora ended her days in penitence and calm, and surrounded by the

friends she held most dear. Lady Glanberris, touched by her repentance and remorse, lent a willing ear to her prayers, and restored her to the place in her friendship she had once forfeited; and the gentle Alice Percy hovered round her dying couch, and breathed words of hope and comfort to her listening ear. It was to her care and love that Leonora bequeathed her infant daughters—satisfied that under such guidance they would be safe, and truly and tenderly did Lady Alice fulfil the trust.

A year after the day on which, in Whittington churchyard, Leonora had been laid by her father's side, Alice became the bride of Sir Edward Devereux, and the children of Leonora went with her to Atherston Castle, to be loved and tended as her own.

THE END.



